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(*Frontispiece*)

RECEPTION OF THE PORTUGUESE BY THE EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA

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THE ROMANCE OF THE PORTUGUESE IN ABYSSINIA

AN ACCOUNT OF THE ADVENTUROUS JOURNEYS OF THE PORTUGUESE TO THE EMPIRE OF PRESTER JOHN; THEIR ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA IN ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST ISLAM AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT EFFORTS TO IMPOSE THEIR OWN INFLUENCE AND RELIGION, 1490–1633. By CHARLES F. REY, Author of *Unconquered Abyssinia as it is To-day* and *In the Country of the Blue Nile*. With Illustrations from old prints and two Maps

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MY WIFE

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INTRODUCTION

Rich as is African history in romantic drama, it holds few more enthralling episodes than the story of the Portuguese in Abyssinia.

In the century and a half from 1487 to 1633 covered by the epic—and it is indeed an epic—we find a succession of explorers, diplomats, soldiers, priests, and missionaries, drawn by the thirst for adventure, knowledge, or power, compiling such a record of hazardous travel, gallant endeavour and zealous labour, of sordid intrigue and unscrupulous scheming, as would supply material in plenty for many a work of fiction.

And, unlike so many other stories of striving, all this effort has led through vicissitudes of success and failure ending in apparent disaster and defeat to a tangible and lasting result, which is the Christian Empire of Abyssinia as it exists to-day.

The story begins with the picture of two stout-hearted Portuguese gentlemen starting out at the behest of their king to search the world for the fabulous empire of the mythical Prester John; we see one dying on the way, the other, Pedro da Covilham, pressing on until, reaching the dominions of the Negus of Abyssinia after three years of wandering, he thought he had

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attained his goal, a goal from which he never returned.

His arrival bore unexpected fruit, for an Armenian emissary was some years later despatched by the very remarkable Queen Regent of Ethiopia to seek aid from the Portuguese king ; and this person, Matheus by name, eventually reached Lisbon, *viâ* India, after a multitude of difficulties and adventures.

There follows the mission under the fiery Dom Rodrigo da Lima, fighting its way across the burning plains and mountain forests of Abyssinia, travelling, struggling, intriguing for six long weary years in the vain effort to link the two kingdoms in the bonds of an alliance.

And then the devastating hordes of Islam sweep down on this Abyssinian "Island of Christians," and in an amazing attempt to stem the tide of the invading thousands we see that very gallant soldier and gentleman Dom Christovao da Gama, son of the great navigator, throw himself with 400 musketeers into the unknown mountains of Abyssinia, weighed down with steel helmet and corselet, and dragging with them little cannon on wooden runners. His companion in arms, Castanhoso, tells of his early successes, his defeat and tragic death, the ultimate triumph of the few Portuguese survivors with their Abyssinian allies, and the consequent preservation of Abyssinia as a Christian empire until to-day.

The last series of pictures is no less interesting —the arrival of the militant Jesuit missionaries

from Portugal in an effort to conquer this new field for their Church; their amazing struggles, fiery zeal and desperate intolerance; the great works—churches, palaces, bridges—they built which still stand to-day; how they converted a king and his court and all but triumphed, and how in a tremendous revulsion of national feeling the cup of success was dashed from their lips, the old national faith restored, and the Jesuits themselves hounded down, murdered, or expelled the country forever.

All this story we are able to acquire from the old Portuguese works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, written, not by historians long after the event, but by the very men themselves who took part in these great doings, such as, for example, Father Francisco Alvarez, the chaplain to da Lima's mission; Castanhoso, an officer of da Gama's expedition; Oviedo, Paez, d'Almeyda, Mendez, and Lobo, all of the zealous band of Jesuit workers; and others.

To piece all these together, to give in a consecutive story the picture of this historic epic, has seemed a task worth some effort, and one which should be of interest, not merely to the student of history or of Africa, but to the far wider circle of all those to whom a great though little-known story of human struggle and adventure drawn from fact and not from fancy might be expected to appeal.

For the purpose of the present work it has of course been necessary to draw *inter alia* on a considerable number of old writers of various

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nationalities; and the task of disentangling a coherent story from their often contradictory, and more often biassed, statements, has been rendered very much more easy by the admirable translations of Alvarez, Castanhoso, and Bermudez, prepared under the auspices of the Hakluyt Society, and the most informing notes accompanying these translations by Lord Stanley of Alderley, and Mr. Whiteway, from whom I have quoted, and to whom I wish to express my very grateful recognition.

The illustrations are for the most part reproductions of old prints, in some cases from old books dealing with the period to which the present work refers; two of the more recent are drawn from the *Illustrated London News* of 1843 and 1868 by the courtesy of the proprietors of that journal.

C. F. R.

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CHAPTER I

COVILHAM'S MISSION TO SEEK PRESTER JOHN

That Abyssinia is to-day an independent Christian country is due in no small degree to that remarkable Prince, Henry the Navigator, whose energy and imagination resulted in the maritime exploration of half the world within the limits of a single century; it is gratifying to us to know that this great patron of travellers was partly of English blood, his father, King John I of Portugal, having married Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt.

With his many exploits and activities we are not here concerned; suffice it to say that the immense impetus given by him to exploration did not die with him but extended long after his death, and that it was in furtherance of his preliminary efforts that emissaries were later on sent to and arrived in Abyssinia.

He had, in common with the rest of Europe, for long heard rumours of an immensely wealthy and powerful potentate ruling over a Christian Empire in the remote confines of Africa or Asia, to whom the strange name of "Prester John" had been given; "Prester John" was indeed

the favourite myth of all travellers in the Orient of those times from Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville onwards.

A letter from one of the Grand Masters of the Knights of St. John, addressed to King Charles VII of France, affirming that the King of Ethiopia was the real Prester John, and a communication from Pope Alexander III, addressed to an Eastern King named John, were regarded as evidence of the African origin of the potentate. The Portuguese exploring expeditions following the West coast of Africa had met with further information as to this kingdom, which seemed to locate it more definitely in Africa ; and this led the Prince to contemplate a twofold attempt to reach it by penetrating into the continent from the west, and by doubling the Cape.

The geographers of the day imagined that the Senegal river rose in the mountains where the sources of the Nile were supposed to be, and the west coast expedition consequently received orders to ascend the Senegal to this point, blowing up any cataracts that might impede the passage of their boats ; a delightfully simple but scarcely practicable plan.

Two other reasons probably influenced the Portuguese to press the quest for the much-talked-of kingdom. The Christian powers of Europe were becoming increasingly alarmed at the growing power and spreading influence of Islam, and no doubt felt that a new and powerful ally against the Moslems would be most welcome. And further, the existence of trade routes right

across Africa, from east to west, had become known to the Portuguese, and they were desirous to ascertain the origin of the spices and other valuable commodities which reached the coast in this way.

Great though was the success attending the expeditions sent out by Prince Henry, the coveted goal of the fabled Christian Empire was not reached during his life-time, but the enthusiasm for exploration inspired by him among his countrymen continued without abatement after his death. It was a quarter of a century later that King John II of Portugal despatched the mission which marked the first stage in the period of a century and a half, during which the stories of Abyssinia and Portugal were so closely linked, and which produced such remarkable and lasting results.

We are told that the king's interest had been stimulated because "in the year one thousand four hundred and eighty-four there came to Portugal the King of Benin, a Caffre by nation, from whom he collected much information about India and its affairs, for he was very desirous to learn with much certainty that the King of it was Prester John who was a Christian and the lord of great riches. Which information produced so great an impression upon the King's heart that he became possessed of an earnest resolve to send and learn about and discover India"—the confusion between India, West Africa, East Africa, and Asia displayed in the old chronicler's statement is delightful.

The king however was determined to have these geographical and other problems solved, and in 1487 he sent for Pedro da Covilham (or perhaps more correctly João Peres de Covilhão), and "spoke to him in great secrecy, telling him that he expected a great service of him, because he had always found him a good and faithful servant, and fortunate in his acts and services; and this service was that he and another companion, who was named Afonso da Payva, should both go to discover and learn about Prester John, and where cinnamon is to be found, and the other spices which from those parts went to Venice through the countries of the Moors."

This Covilham seems to have been a man eminently suited for the difficult and dangerous task with which he was entrusted. He had distinguished himself in the war with Spain, and had rendered useful service to his country in Morocco, in diplomatic negotiations and in commercial undertakings. Unfortunately he has left no book to tell us of his travels, but we have a first-hand, if abbreviated, account of them from Father Francisco Alvarez, who met him in Abyssinia in 1520-1526, and to whom Covilham as his "spiritual son" told him many things "in confession and out of it."

Alvarez describes him as "an honourable person of merit and credit," and says that he was "a man who knows all the languages that can be spoken, both of Christians, Moors and Gentiles, and who knows all the things for which he was sent; moreover he gives an account

of them as if they were present before him."

It is not surprising that such a man gladly accepted the king's offer, and with Dom Alphonso da Payva he was despatched from Santarem on May 7th, 1487, by the king's cousin and successor on the throne, Dom Manuel. Their equipment does not seem to have been extravagant; they were provided with "a map for navigating, taken from the map of the world," and a "letter of credence for all the countries and provinces of the world;" the King's blessing, and 400 cruzadoes from the Royal Treasury, half in cash and half in bills on Naples.

Neither of them was ever to see their native land again, and with their lives they forged the first link in the chain that was to bind Portugal and Abyssinia for a century and a half.

That the Portuguese were not explorers merely in the cause of the science of geography was very evident from the instructions that Covilham received. The reasons for the desirability of discovering the land of Prester John have already been touched on; in addition to this, the main object of their journey, they were to enquire "what were the principal markets for the spice and particularly the pepper trade in India; and what were the different channels by which this was conveyed to Europe; whence came the gold and silver, the medium of this trade; and above all they were to inform themselves distinctly, whether it was possible to arrive in India by sailing round the Southern promontory of Africa."

The object of the Portuguese was obvious—the Venetians were their great competitors, and they (the Portuguese) were anxious to divert directly by sea to Portugal the immensely valuable trade "brought from those eastern parts up the Red Sea and thence by land to Grand Cairo and Alexandria, and so to Venice by the Mediterranean."

The programme thus outlined was an ambitious one, and Covilham might well have been excused for entertaining misgivings as to the possibilities of fulfilling it, especially as two men had already tried and failed, namely "a man of the house of Monterio, and a friar named frey Antonio . . . who had arrived at Jerusalem, and . . . returned thence, saying that it was not possible to go to those countries without knowing Arabic."

But Covilham was of another metal, and without delay he betook himself to Barcelona, and thence to Naples, where he arrived on St. John's Day and where "their journey was given them by the sons of Cosmo de Medecis." Thence they journeyed to Rhodes, where he found two Portuguese friars who received them with much kindness and hospitality. They completed their disguise as merchants by the purchase of a considerable store of honey, and with this they arrived in due course at Alexandria. But here their first misfortunes befell them, for they were seized with a sort of fever which so prostrated them that they were thought to be dying. This was too good an opportunity for the official, whom they describe as the "Naib" of Alexandria, and

lest it should be wasted he promptly seized and removed their valuable store of honey.

However "God gave them health," and after they had shaken off their fevers they purchased a fresh stock of goods and pushed on to Cairo, where after waiting some time they joined a caravan of "Moghreby Moors of Fez and Tremacem," with whom they travelled to Tor (at the foot of Mount Sinai), thence to Suakin and finally to Aden.

Here they separated, and after this we do not know anything very definite as to da Payva's movements. All that is known for certain is that he crossed the Red Sea from Aden and probably landed somewhere on the Abyssinian coast whence his death was reported shortly afterwards.

Covilham now started off on a remarkable series of journeys. He reached India from Aden and visited Cananoor; thence he proceeded to Calicut, and afterwards went on to Goa.

He was astounded by all that he saw, and well he may have been, for it would have stirred a duller mind than his to be confronted with the picture so graphically described by Reade—the activity and grandeur of the commerce; the magnificence of the Courts; the half-naked kings blazing with jewels, saying their prayers on rosaries of precious stones, and using golden goblets as spittoons; the elephants with pictures drawn in bright colours on their ears, and with jugglers in towers, on their backs; the enormous temples filled with lovely girls; the idols of gold with ruby eyes; the houses of red sandalwood;

the scribes who wrote on palm-leaves with iron pens; the pilots who took observations with instruments unknown to Europeans; the huge bundles of cinnamon or cassia in the warehouses of the Arab merchants; the pepper vines trailing over trees; and drugs which were priceless in Europe growing in the fields like corn.

After leaving Goa he journeyed on to Ormuz and then from there to Aden and on to Zeila. Here he joined forces with some Moorish merchants and went south to Sofala; he came back again to Zeila and Aden, and on to Tor and Cairo, seeking news of his companion. It was in Cairo that he heard the news of da Payva's death, and then, whether discouraged by this or thinking that he had discharged as much of his mission as was feasible, he was on the point of starting back for Portugal.

But his plans were changed for him as a result of meeting with two Portuguese Jews, Rabbi Abraham of Beja, and Joseph of Lamego, who were searching for him to deliver letters they bore from the King of Portugal. Apparently one of these Jews had, when in Babylon, heard wonderful accounts of the riches of Ormuz, and had on his return to Portugal hastened to inform the king of these reports. No doubt much to his discomfiture the King had promptly told him to go off and look for Ormuz, with an intimation that if they found out all that was reported, " that they should return and welcome; " if not, they were to report what they did find and " labour to learn the rest."

They must accordingly have been greatly pleased to learn that Covilham had already been to Ormuz, and one of them, Joseph of Lamego, returned forthwith to Portugal bearing Covilham's reports of all that he had seen and learned.

Covilham told the King "how he had been in India, and found that the Portuguese ships might by way of the ocean sail thither, and that his companion had been in an empire called Ethiopia and at the court of that monarch, who was a Christian, and in all likelihood the famous Prester John." (This latter statement was, of course, wrong, as Covilham discovered later.) And he went on to tell "how he had discovered cinnamon and pepper in the city of Calicut, and that cloves came from beyond," and that, as for reaching India by sea, "the ships which sailed down the coast of Guinea might be sure of reaching the termination of the Continent by keeping on to the South; and that when they arrived in the Eastern Ocean they must ask for Sofala and the Island of the 'Moon'" (i.e. Madagascar.)

Covilham himself, however, seems to have been instructed by the letters brought by the two Jews to concentrate on looking for Prester John. His subsequent journeyings appear therefore to be somewhat inexplicable, for he travelled south once more to Aden, where he left Rabbii Abraham, and then returned up the Red Sea to Jeddah, whence he claims to have penetrated into Mecca and El Medina—a very remarkable feat, if this be true. Thence he went up to Mount

Sinai, and embarking at Tor sailed right down the Red Sea, through the Straits of Bab el Mandeb and landed at Zeila, then within the theoretical limits of Abyssinia, now the northern-most port in British Somaliland.

Fortunately for Covilham, the then Emperor of Abyssinia, Iskander, had descended from his capital of Tegulet in Shoa at the head of his army to wage war against his Moslem foe, the King of Adal, and had defeated him in the neighbourhood of Zeila. Covilham was accordingly able to join him without difficulty, and was received by the king "with much pleasure and joy," accompanying him on his return march into Shoa.

King Iskander was greatly pleased with Covilham, treated him well, and told him that in due course "he would send him to his country with much honour." But matters did not proceed with any more rapidity in Abyssinia in those days than they do at present, and when after some years the assassin's knife laid Iskander low, Covilham was still at the Abyssinian Court.

On one occasion he had got leave to depart and had actually started off with many presents and a large retinue. From the emperor he bore a large crown of gold and silver as a gift to the King of Portugal, with a letter in which the Abyssinian monarch wrote: "A crown is not wont to be taken from the father's head, but only for the son, and that he was his son, and that he had taken it from his head to send him as the most precious thing he had." And he went on

to say that they must combine together to fight the Moors and penetrate as far as Jerusalem.

But Covilham did not get far on his journey; a quarrel broke out between his escort and some people of the country, and the emperor recalled the party to his court at Shoa.

As Reade has pointed out, it was the glory and pride of a savage king to have a white man at his court, and the kings of Abyssinia were glad to have a tame white man of their own; that kind of complimentary captivity was a danger to which African travellers were always exposed, and it was one from which Covilham was not to escape. He married an Abyssinian lady of rank, was given lands, great possessions and high office. He was allowed to communicate with the King of Portugal, but he was never permitted to leave the country, though he was apparently high in the confidence of Kings Naod and Lebna Dengel, the successors of Iskander. (King Amda Syon II, who followed immediately on Iskander, reigned only 7 months.)

Covilham's letters to the King of Portugal aroused immense interest in that country. We are told that "it was generally concluded throughout all Portugal that the so much sought after Prester John was now found out; whereas the real Prince of that name must be in Asia, and this here was in Africk, for the Prester John they were sent to find out was a Christian prince reigning in the inland of Asia at the time when Marco Polo travelled there."

His news as to the passage round South Africa

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had been confirmed (if not preceded) by the reports of Bartholomew Diaz in 1488; and in 1497 Vasco da Gama was commissioned with three ships to follow up the indications given by those discoverers.

A Portuguese, Fernao Gomez by name, and a Moor, were commissioned to support Covilham; they were landed by Tristao da Cunha at Melindi, and picked up at Cape Guardafui by Albuquerque in 1508; their mission was to find Covilham and then to make their way back to Portugal through Abyssinia via Timbuktu and the Senegal River! They got as far as Abyssinia, but were not allowed to leave it, and were discovered there by da Lima's mission in 1520: it is unfortunate that we are not told how they got into Abyssinia, for their journey from Guardafui must have been a marvellous one, if indeed they followed their instructions, and did not (as is more likely) take ship north to Massawa or to Zeila and work in from there.

A letter from Albuquerque to the King of Portugal at about this time is interesting as shewing the magnitude of the former's ideas and his powers of imagination. He wished to undertake no less a task than to attempt the diversion of the Nile, his idea being to: "pierce through a very small range of hills which runs along the side of the River Nile in the land of the Preste Joao so as to divert its waters into another bed and destroy the irrigation of the lands of Cairo." He begged the King of Portugal to send him workmen "accustomed to cut the rocks

so as to make trenches," and he added that the work could be carried out very easily, for "the Preste Joao was very desirous of accomplishing it."

The idea was not a new one, for Lalibala was credited with having tried to start the stupendous task in the XIIIth century; but that Albuquerque should have thought of it seriously is remarkable.

The Portuguese believed themselves capable of anything at that time, and so elated were they at their maritime and territorial discoveries (as well they may have been) that in 1502 King Emanuel I of Portugal obtained from the Pope Alexander VI a bull constituting him "lord of the navigation, conquest, and trade of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India," a lordship which, so far as Ethiopia was concerned, was never to be effective.

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CHAPTER II

MATHEUS'S MISSION TO EUROPE

Covilham having thus established contact between Portugal and Abyssinia, the next link in the chain between the two countries was to be forged by a woman, one of the most remarkable characters that enter into this story.

Queen Helena had been one of the four wives of the Emperor Baeda Maryam, who reigned from 1468 to 1478, the only one of the four who was childless; she was originally a Moslem, the daughter of Garad Ahmed, the Moslem Governor of Douaro, who held that province for the king.

Although the Abyssinians at this time were Christians, it was by no means uncommon for their monarchs to marry a plurality of wives, and among them to include a daughter of one of their Moslem vassals or neighbours. Indeed, Alvarez relates that the Moslem wars, which commenced in the reign of Lebna Dengel, were in part due to the fact that the king had mortally affronted one of his tributary Moslem sovereigns by refusing to marry his sister because "she had large front teeth and when he saw her he did not like her."

Helena seems from the records of the times to have occupied a favoured position during her husband's life, in spite of the two drawbacks referred to; she was known as Qan Baaltehat, the Queen of the right hand, and her court name was Admas Mogasa, which means "Beautiful as a Diamond." The old Abyssinian chronicler says: "Our King loved the Queen Qan Baaltehaat very much; her name was Eleni (Helena): she was accomplished in everything: she rendered herself agreeable to God by her good works and her faith and in attending to prayers and communion, and she was admired by everybody for her skill in preparing the table, her grace at the ceremonies of the Court, and her knowledge of writing and beautiful language. It was on account of these qualities that Baeda Maryam loved our Queen Eleni very much and treated her as his own mother."

Tellez tells us that she was "much respected by all men for her singular gravity and wisdom," and goes on to say, "This lady had neither son nor daughter, but enjoyed many lands left her in the kingdom of Gojam by her husband, was very rich, and performed extraordinary works."

She appears indeed from all the accounts we have of her to have been an intelligent and ambitious woman, possessed of far better judgment than most of her compatriots, albeit somewhat masterful and overbearing. Alvarez gives a delightful glimpse of this side of her character when describing a visit to the queen's church. He says: "Here they told us not to find any

fault with it, because the Prester's mother was so fanciful that if we found any fault with it or said that it was not so good as that of her son, that she would order it to be thrown down, and to be constructed afresh." (*See Note at end of chapter.*)

On her husband's death in 1478, when she must have been between twenty-five and thirty, she appears to have taken no active part in the affairs of the kingdom. Another of the king's wives, Romana Wark, and her son Iskander were brought from the mountain of Amba Geshen, where all the royal family were confined, and were proclaimed respectively regent and emperor, so that it is clear that Helena was in the background. But on the death of Iskander, seventeen years later, followed in seven months by that of his seven-year-old son, who succeeded him, Helena seems to have endeavoured to secure the nomination to the throne of Anko Israel, another son of Baeda Maryam by his wife Romana Wark. In this she was unsuccessful, and an elder brother Naod by name was elected, and reigned for thirteen years.

It was not until 1508, when Helena was between fifty-five and sixty, that she succeeded in grasping the reins of power; then she caused Naod's son, Lebna Dengel, who was at the time eleven years old, to be raised to the throne, and secured her own nomination as regent.

She now exhibited qualities of real statesmanship. Realising that Abyssinia and the neighbouring sea-coast Moslem kingdom of Adal were really necessary to each other's welfare,

and that the prosperity of each depended on commerce with the other; realising also that one of Abyssinia's main outlets to the sea lay through Adal, and influenced also to some extent no doubt by her previous Moslem connection, she used all her efforts to promote peace between the countries.

Whether she would have succeeded or not ultimately when Lebna Dengel became of age it is difficult at this stage to say, but other and outside events changed the course of history.

The Moslems had acquired possession of Zeila and the neighbouring district ot Harar, and there had arisen in that country a great Somali warrior, Mahfuz by name, who was inspired by the most fanatical and violent hatred of the Christian inhabitants of Abyssinia. Knowing that the people observed with great strictness the forty days' fast of Lent (as indeed they do to-day), and that towards the end of this period they were much weakened by their abstinence from meat, eggs, butter and milk, he conducted annually a great raid into the country at this period, carrying off large herds of cattle, and great numbers ot the population as slaves.

Previous kings had occasionally repelled his attacks, but they had never been able to crush him; although he never attempted to occupy the country, his raids were renewed intermittently, and he refused in any way to follow the more peaceful inclinations of his co-religionist and one-time ally, the King of Adal, a kingdom which comprised all the tribes now called Danakil,

the capital being at Aussa, some little distance inland from Zeila.

This was a cause of intense annoyance to the Abyssinians, and militated strongly against Helena's peaceful policy.

Moreover, the power of the Turks had by this time increased greatly, and they had for some time begun their period of conquest and penetration in Africa and the Red Sea, which was to lead up to the conquest of Egypt in 1517.

Moved by these events, and foreseeing the effect of the Turkish advance, hearing also continuously from Covilham of the power of the Portuguese, the Queen determined to invoke the assistance of these Christian enemies of Islam.

The main difficulty was to find a suitable ambassador, for no Abyssinians could speak Portuguese, and moreover it would have been extremely difficult for any of them to penetrate the Moslem countries surrounding Abyssinia.

The queen accordingly decided to send one Matheus, an Armenian (who had changed his name from Abraham), and with the aid of Covilham letters were prepared for King Emanuel of Portugal, setting forth the state of the country and begging him to send assistance. Helena was on the horns of a dilemma in preparing these letters, for on the one hand it was necessary to make out her case and establish Matheus's position, and on the other hand it was undesirable to say too much lest the letters should fall into the hands of those against whom she was seeking

assistance, but with whom she was at the moment in more or less peaceful relations.

Apparently however her fears overcame her prudence, for the latter part of the letter was sufficiently outspoken to ensure in Bruce's words that "Matheus's embassy and life would have ended together under some exquisite species of torture, had these letters been intercepted."

In addition, Matheus was given verbal instructions, setting out the position even more drastically, and the king was asked to believe whatever he might be told by Matheus in private "as if they were her own words uttered immediately from her to him in person," as Matheus was "instructed in her most secret intentions."

The Portuguese allege that these verbal instructions allowed Matheus to offer the king a third of the territory of Abyssinia, but of this there is no evidence. If this were true, however, it would help to account for the reluctance of the Abyssinians later on to recognise Matheus as having been their official ambassador, when da Lima finally reached the Abyssinian court.

Matheus started off in 1510, reached the coast at Zeila in safety, and arrived in India without adventure. No sooner had he landed, however, than the Portuguese treated him with the greatest contempt and suspicion. They would not believe that such a mean person could be the envoy of the mighty Prester John, and they were supported in their view by the fact that Matheus refused firmly to show his despatches to anyone save the King of Portugal. He was regarded as a spy

of the Turks, and as an impostor, and was in fact thrown into prison. In spite of the interest shown in him by the Viceroy Dom Affonso d'Albuquerque, who had him released from prison, and of the fact that he carried a fragment of the true cross as a present to the King of Portugal, it was three years before he could persuade the Portuguese to help him on his way to Portugal. Even when he had embarked, his difficulties were not at an end, for the ship's captain and officers appear to have treated him abominably, as a result of which they were put in irons on reaching Lisbon.

The Portuguese accounts of this period vary considerably. In some of them Matheus's ill treatment is made light of, but that he had a very hard time is clear from d'Albuquerque's chronicler, who says: "What an astonishing thing it is that people should have doubted this man to be a true ambassador from the Prester Joao, and decided hastily, that he was a Moor. . . . These are the words of Satan who ever seeks to exercise his influence in the quarter where he perceives he can do the greatest injury."

There was some excuse for the incredulity of the Portuguese for, in order to avert suspicion, Matheus travelled without retinue or ostentation of any sort, and had even only been told his route and given his instructions at the last moment, the reason being that, if anyone at the court had known of his mission, he would not have got through alive, so permeated was it with Moorish spies. Moreover, he can hardly be

regarded as being an ideal ambassador, for on one occasion it is recorded that after a heated interview at court he became "quiet as a lamb instead of the raging lion that he usually was"—this hardly savours of diplomacy!

However, his difficulties ceased as soon as he reached the court of Portugal—probably in 1514—for King Emanuel I received him with every sort of honour, lodged him in great splendour, and listened with sympathy to his requests. Some of the Abyssinian's king's proposals must, however, have amused the Portuguese sovereign, for *inter alia* "the Preste desired the marriage of his children with those of the king of Portugal, as it were in exchange."

The king determined, however, to accede to some extent to the request for help from the Abyssinian monarch, considering no doubt that a powerful ally on the African coast of the Red Sea would be of material assistance to his squadrons when fighting the Turkish and other Moslem fleets, and it was decided that a mission should be despatched to Abyssinia *viâ* India through the agency of the Viceroy of that territory.

Note.—Alvarez gives the relationship incorrectly. Helena was the wife of Lebna Dengel's grandfather; she was childless.

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CHAPTER III

DA LIMA'S MISSION

Having made up his mind to send an embassy to the Court of Ethiopia, King Emanuel lost no time in making the necessary arrangements. He chose for the Ambassador an able and experienced gentleman, Dom Duarte Galvan, who had already fulfilled similar functions at the courts of France, Germany and Spain, and had been a Secretary of State ; with him he sent a numerous suite including Father Francisco Alvarez, to whom we are indebted for the very naive and interesting account of the mission ; and of course the Abyssinian envoy Matheus accompanied the party.

The objects of the mission were manifold—*inter alia* they were told to settle whether the empire of Prester John extended as far as the Cape of Good Hope !—but the principal point of course was to make some kind of Treaty with Abyssinia, partly of a commercial nature, and partly to provide for mutual support against their common enemy the Moslems, who were rapidly increasing in power. Had Galvan lived to reach the Court of Abyssinia it is possible

that something of the kind might have been arranged; but unfortunately he was much too old for such a mission—Tellez says he was over seventy and Bruce gives his age as eighty-six—and, as will be seen later on, he succumbed to the rigours of the climate *en route*.

A new Viceroy of India, Dom Lopo Soarez, was at this time setting out to replace the great Affonso Dalboquerque; and Galvan and his party sailed with him early in 1515, and reached India later on in that year. Here difficulties and delays arose as to forwarding the mission on to Abyssinia, for the despatch of a fleet to the Red Sea was not lightly to be undertaken in view of the numerous hostile Moslem vessels that were to be found there, and the growing power of Islam on both coasts of those waters.

It was accordingly not until 1517 that Lopo Soarez set sail from India, and reaching the Red Sea anchored off the island of Camaran on the eastern shore nearly opposite Massawa. This was an unfortunate choice of situation, for the climate played havoc with the Portuguese, and unfortunately one of the first to succumb was the aged ambassador Galvan.

Lopo Soarez, an incompetent person, seems to have been puzzled as to the proper course to pursue; he sailed aimlessly up and down the Red Sea, his one achievement being to burn the town of Zeila in July, 1517, which had been taken by the Moors from the Abyssinians. He developed suspicions with regard to the unhappy Matheus, and refused to land him or any of the

mission in Abyssinia; and after wintering off Camaran returned to India with the whole party.

Soarez was relieved by another new Viceroy in 1518, Dom Lopez de Segueyra, and at last, after many delays and with some doubt and hesitation, the mission started off early in 1520 for Abyssinia once more, convoyed by Segueyra in a strong fleet, and reached Massawa on April 7th in that year.

They were warmly received by the Christian part of the population of Arkiko (which at that time still belonged to Abyssinia), and a party of friars came down to greet them from a neighbouring monastery. But the most satisfactory feature was the arrival at Arkiko of the Bahrnagast, (the Abyssinian governor of the province) who came to meet them with a party of two hundred horse and one thousand foot.

The Viceroy appears to have jeopardised the success of this very important meeting by some absurd preliminary discussion with the Bahrnagast as to the procedure and etiquette to be followed at the interview. The Viceroy and the Governor each wished the other to come to him, and at last they had to compromise and meet each other halfway in a "very wide plain seated upon carpets."

The interview however was quite satisfactory, and at the end of it the two leaders swore eternal friendship on the cross; then the Portuguese fired a salute from the ships' guns. Their marksmanship seems to have been erratic and nearly resulted in a catastrophe, for "a ball from a

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MASSAWA

The starting point on the Abyssinian Coast of the Portuguese Expeditions of da Lima and da Gama. Now the principal port of Italian Eritrea.

camel-gun made three rebounds among the men of the Barnegaes without hitting anyone." The Bahrnagast was however something of a philosopher, for when the Viceroy hastened to send him an apology he replied that " no one was safe unless God pleased, and that the ball had done no one any harm."

The Abyssinians received Matheus well, and thus once again the suspicions which always seemed to gather afresh round the unfortunate man's head were temporarily dispelled. Now everyone in the fleet clamoured to go with him to find the Prester, whereas a short while before they all " held him to be false and a liar, so that there were grounds for putting him on shore and leaving him alone."

The Viceroy had some difficulty in selecting the personnel of the mission, but it was finally constituted under the leadership of Dom Rodrigo da Lima—a most unfortunate choice—and on April 30th the fleet stood out of the harbour, and the little band of eighteen started off inland on their long and hazardous journey—a journey that was to last six years, and from which some of them never returned.

The composition of the party is interesting, and as most of them figure in the remarkable episodes to be narrated later, it may be well to describe them here.

The chief of the mission, Rodrigo da Lima, was young, overbearing and impatient ; arrogant and intolerant of contradiction, and generally about the last man to be placed in a position demanding

diplomatic skill, patience, and tact to a high degree.

The second in command was Jorge d'Abreu, who quarrelled bitterly and consistently with his chief throughout the expedition. We are told that "he was a very well-dressed gentleman," which is not generally regarded as the most essential qualification for an African traveller. The most successful and delightful member was of course Father Francisco Alvarez; he acted as peace-maker and conciliator throughout, and it is probably owing to his tact and wise counsels that any of them got away at all, for at times the relations between the emperor and da Lima were more than strained. His qualities seem to have been appreciated by the Viceroy, who evidently feared that they would be called into play; for on bidding farewell to the party he said: "Dom Rodrigo, I do not send the Father Francisco Alvarez with you, but I send you with him, and do not do anything without his advice."

The next most important person was Bermudez, who is always referred to by Alvarez as Mestre Joam; he played a comparatively unimportant part in this mission, but a very prominent one indeed later on. He was left behind when da Lima departed in 1526, returned to Portugal in 1535, and came back again to Abyssinia with Dom Christovao da Gama's expedition in 1541. On the present occasion he acted as barber-bleeder, or surgeon.

There was also a "clerk to the embassy," Joam Escolas, and a painter, Lazaro d'Andrade

(who was left behind with Bermudez); an "interpreter and factor," Joam Gonsalves, and a "player of organs," Manoel de Mares. Other members of whom we do not hear much are Lopo da Gama, Pero Lopez (Father Alvarez' nephew), Joam Fernandez, Alonzo Mendez, and Dom Rodrigo's two servants, Gaspar Pereira and Esternan Palharte, the latter of whom was said to be a good fencer.

In addition, Matheus had with him three Portuguese, Magalhaes, Abraenga, and Diogo Fernandez, "all men skilful in manual arts, and who could sing at mass."

The presents which they took with them were very poor, and not at all such as might have been expected to impress Prester John with a proper idea of the wealth and power of Portugal; they consisted of "a gold sword with a rich hilt, four pieces of tapestry, some rich cuirasses, a helmet and two swivel guns, four chambers, some balls, two barrels of powder, a map of the world, and some organs."

That so insignificant a batch of presents should have been collected is partly explained by the fact that the much more valuable gifts previously sent by the King of Portugal through Galvan "had been dispersed in Cochim by Lopo Soares." From the explanations furnished by Alvarez and other observations made by him, and from more excuses later offered to the Prester by da Lima, it would appear that when Segueyra sailed from India with da Lima and the rest he had been so disturbed by his suspicions of Matheus

that he had contemplated landing the latter alone on the coast of Abyssinia and not forwarding the mission at all; it was only when they reached Massawa (which apparently they had doubted being able to do) and found Matheus so cordially received by the Abyssinians, that it was decided to let the mission go forward. It was of course then too late to obtain suitable and adequate presents, and a collection was made from the ship's equipment and the personal belongings of the more important officers of the fleet. This question of presents is referred to at some length, as it was not without influence on the fortunes of the mission.

No sooner had the expedition landed than their troubles began. The Abyssinian Governor who was to provide transport for them was as dilatory as Abyssinians are to-day; and as the promised horses, mules and camels did not arrive, the impatience of that very impatient person, da Lima, and the cupidity of Matheus, drove them into their first error. Matheus had brought some trade goods with him which he was anxious to put in safe keeping with some friends, monks at the neighbouring monastery of St. Michael in Bisan. He accordingly persuaded the Ambassador that they would get much better equipment from the monks of this monastery, which he said was some twenty or thirty miles off, than from the Governor, and induced da Lima to tell the Governor so. This worthy, nothing loth to be relieved of the bother of providing transport, promptly left the Portuguese

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in the lurch with a wholly inadequate number of animals to carry their goods, and departed to his own headquarters.

Nevertheless, urged on by Matheus, they started off to Bisan, each of them having to carry "gourds, and leather ewers and water skins of the country with water," and guided by him left the ordinary track, despite the protestation of other Abyssinians, and got entangled in appallingly difficult country, which got worse and worse as they went on. Alvarez says: "We departed from this halt by much more precipitous ground and channels than those of the day before and larger woods. We on foot and the mules unridden in front of us, we could not travel; the camels shrieked as though sin was laying hold of them. It seemed to all that Matheus was bringing us here to kill us. . . . There was nothing for it but to call on God, for sins were going about in those woods; at midday the wild animals were innumerable and had little fear of people. The people that we found here are almost naked, so that all they had showed, and they were very black."

They struggled on however, their goods carried on the heads of porters, but "Satan did not cease from weaving his wiles and caused strife to arise among our people," and they quarrelled bitterly among themselves, even fighting each other with their lances, reviling Matheus, and suffering intensely from heat, thirst and fear of attack by man and beast. Eventually they reached the monastery, only to be told by

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Matheus that they could not go any further until they had sent a messenger to Queen Helena announcing their arrival, and had received her reply: a double journey which he said would take at least forty days, but which would certainly have taken longer. He also told them that they must await the arrival of the bishop of the district in order to obtain transport, and that the rains were approaching, which would last three months, during which time travel was impossible.

While the Portuguese were still staggering under this blow a further calamity fell on them —they were seized with a form of plague, and practically none escaped its attack. Their remedies were worse than the disease, "copious blood-letting and excessive purging," and in a few days Matheus and a servant of da Lima's died from it, and were buried at the convent. The others recovered in spite of their remedies, and after burying Matheus proceeded to quarrel with the monks as to the disposal and custody of the unfortunate man's trade goods, which had been one of the causes of their ill-advised détour to Bisan.

And so the Portuguese were left helpless; their guide and introducer was dead, they were bereft of means of transport, the monks failed to produce any, and they had cut themselves off from the Governor's help by their impetuous action on arrival.

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CHAPTER IV

DA LIMA'S MISSION (*continued*)

JOURNEY THROUGH ABYSSINIA

In these circumstances there was only one course of action open to da Lima—he must swallow his pride and appeal to the Governor for help. For some reason which is not very clear the monks at St. Michael's monastery were very much against his doing so, and asked him to wait for ten days until the arrival of the bishop who was to solve all their difficulties, failing which they would supply what was necessary themselves.

Da Lima promised not to send to the Governor, but in this connection there follows an unsavoury episode which shows the Portuguese in a far from favourable light, and goes some way to explain the unfortunate impression they made on the country. Alvarez says: "Because these people were unconfiding they would not trust in the ambassador . . . and they took an oath from all of us on the crucifix that we would wait for the said ten days."

Nevertheless da Lima appears to have sent off a party to ask the Governor for help at once,

and at the end of the ten days received a message from him that he was sending oxen and mules for their transport. (Incidentally they did not arrive for some time.) Alvarez says: "On the part of the friars nothing came"—which was hardly surprising.

They appear to have spent six weeks in all at this monastery waiting for transport, and Alvarez gives some quaint accounts of this and other religious houses, their revenues, the Communion and other Church services, the method of making sacramental bread and wine, the system of agriculture, and other matters of interest.

Here again the Portuguese do not seem to have impressed their hosts very much as regards their manners. The Abyssinians always entered their churches barefoot, and treated them with great reverence; then, as now, an Abyssinian riding past a church would dismount and kiss the ground. Consequently, the Portuguese lack of manners must have shocked them very much, and as Alvarez said naively: "They were surprised at our coming into the church with our shoes on, and still more at our spitting in it. The boasted superiority of European culture (?) seems to have suffered by comparison with the habits of this savage African race. Indeed, so much were the monks upset with the Portuguese lack of manners that they refused to allow them to continue to say Mass in their church, "at which we were much scandalised and aggrieved, and it seemed to us that they had some evil

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suspicion of us, not knowing why they so acted."

The monastery itself was a fine building, "very large in bulk, and larger in revenues and . . . very well fitted. The fashion of this house is of three large and beautiful houses with their arches and vaulted roofs. They appear to be of wood, and because all is painted it is not certain whether it is of stone or wood. It has two sets of cloisters round the body of the church, both covered in, and much painted with figures of apostles, patriarchs, prophets, and many things of the Old Law, many angels and St. George on horseback, who is in all the churches."

The entrances were closed by curtains, to which little bells were suspended, so that nobody could enter without these bells ringing. The bells were of stone—"long thin stones suspended by cords passed through them . . . and they made a sound as of cracked bells heard at a distance."

Three hundred friars attended service at the monastery, and on feast days "they made a very beautiful procession through the canopied circuit," wearing cloaks of brocades and velvet of Mekah, and carrying silver crosses, thuribles of brass, and a great gold chalice and gold spoon with which they administered Communion.

No females were allowed to enter the precincts, "that is to say neither woman nor she-mules nor cows nor hens nor anything that is female."

When Alvarez came here he was riding a she-mule, and the monks came out "a cross-bow shot" from the walls, and removed the

mule to a safe distance, and to where they could not be contaminated! It was possibly owing to this ultra-strict rule that very few of the three hundred friars actually inhabited the monastery.

Just as is the case to-day in Abyssinia, the monks did no work, but existed on the immense revenues arising from the great territories attached to the monastery; part of the revenue was paid in horses, of which a certain number had to be sent to the king, and occasionally cows were substituted for the horses, the rate of exchange being fifty cows to a horse.

At last on June 4th, after a month's delay, oxen and mules arrived from the Governor, but there were not nearly enough of them, so that further messengers had to be sent to him for more help, and it was not until the 15th that a start was finally made, though even then some of the baggage (including the bombards and four barrels of powder) had to be left behind, and "the friars were set on impeding us greatly, as though they wished us evil."

The rainy season had now set in, and amid all the difficulties and discomforts due to tropical downpours they started off through wild mountains, over ascents and descents, and through large woods; hardly had they set off when the men who carried their goods mutinied through fear of robbers. They met with an "infinite quantity of apes in herds, very large the size of sheep, and from the middle upwards hairy like lions," and with some difficulty on June 18th

reached the town of Barua[1]—they had taken seven weeks to cover one hundred miles—the headquarters of the district ruled by that Governor with whom they had already had such unsatisfactory dealings. He, however, had moved on to another town about twelve miles away, called Ceruel in Barua, and to this place da Lima and a few of the party pursued him, meeting with a very poor reception. The Governor kept them waiting a long time under the plea that he was sleeping, and then sent them away for the night without seeing them; they had to spend the night in a goat-shed, which must have offended da Lima's olfactory nerves excessively. In the morning they were again kept waiting, standing in the sun, and when at last they got past the doorkeepers (who demanded a bribe of pepper to let them through) they found the Governor on his bed "with sore eyes," his wife sitting by him. Da Lima offered him a doctor to cure him, but the Governor said "that he had no need of him, as though he did not thank him for it."

After this unpromising opening, they got down to business and asked for more transport animals, to which the Governor replied "that he could not give any mules, and that we might buy them ourselves, and that he would give orders for the rest."

They had to be content with his somewhat ungracious half-promises, and returned to Barua,

[1] The modern Debaroa, later capital of Tigre, about eighteen Portuguese leagues (nearly seventy miles) from Massawa as the crow flies.

where they had to wait another ten days before being able to start.

The time here seems to have passed quite pleasantly, the town itself being agreeably situated on a high cliff above a river, commanding a large cultivated plain in which lay a number of large villages. Game was plentiful; they killed twenty or so hares in a morning "without dogs, but caught with nets, and many partridges with springes, just like piping goats to a fold;" birds of all kinds indeed seemed to have almost offered themselves for sacrifice, the reason being, according to Alvarez, that "nobody hunts or fishes, nor have they engines nor devices nor the will to do it." Wild animals also abounded, but they seem to have suffered from the prevailing tameness, and gave the travellers no trouble.

As was his habit, Alvarez studied the people and their customs, of which he gives many interesting accounts. Although they were nominally Christians, and the Church forbade more than a single wife, yet they appear to have indulged in unlimited numbers of matrimonial alliances. The owner of the house in which Alvarez stayed had seven wives and thirty children.

Debarua appears to have been a centre of commercial and matrimonial activity. A great market was held here, to which merchants travelled from considerable distances; the ladies of the town sold their wheat and salt, and "give hospitality to those that sleep there that day," on this account there are many "women in

the town because the men are well off and are like courtiers, and they take two or three or more if it pleases them."

Regular marriages also took place, and one witnessed by Alvarez is thus described by him: "On the open spaces before some houses they placed a bedstead, and seated upon it the bridegroom and the bride, and there came thither three priests, and they began to chant . . . walking three times round the bedstead on which the couple were seated. Then they cut a lock of hair from the head of the bridegroom, and another from the head of the bride. They wetted these locks with mead, and placed the hair of the bridegroom on the head of the bride, and that of the bride on the head of the bridegroom, and then sprinkled them with holy water; after that they kept their festivities and wedding feasts. At night they put them in a house, and for a month from that time no one saw the bride, except one man only, whom they call the best man who remains all this month with the married couple. If she is an honourable woman she does not go out of the house for five or six months, nor remove a black veil from her face, and if before that she becomes pregnant, she removes the veil."

Their troubles at this stage of the journey began and ended with the transport of their goods and themselves, for, do what they would, the Governor put them off again and again with idle excuses. Once they got their goods about halfway between Barua and Barra, but here

they were left out in the open for four days while disputes raged between da Lima and the Governor.

At last they got themselves and part of their goods to Barra, about fifteen miles from Barua; an envoy from the emperor arrived to see the Governor at about this time, and da Lima not unnaturally thought this a good moment to press his request for adequate transport. But the former was too busy with his imperial master's messenger (whom he had to receive stripped from the waist upwards) to waste time on the wretched Portuguese, and turning on them roughly "he sent us away saying that for the love of God we should leave him, that he was sick."

Da Lima tried to buy mules, but the people of the countryside were forbidden to sell to him, because the Governor wished to sell him his own! Nevertheless he was not ashamed to send to borrow weapons from the Portuguese to help him in the prosecution of a little war in which he was engaged, and as he could not borrow enough he stole some more from them at night.

Matters now became very strained between the Portuguese and this very trying official—whose counterpart yet lives in Abyssinia to-day—and at last he was informed that if he did not supply adequate transport the goods and presents destined for the emperor would be burned, and the Portuguese would push on without them. This threat appears to have produced the desired result, for four days later animals arrived and the rest of the luggage of the party was deposited at Barra—on July 3rd.

Even yet they were not out of the wood, for they had not enough transport to move all their belongings together; they managed to buy some riding mules, and the Governor gave them three camels; and so amid the torrential tropical rains they covered in the next three days the fifteen miles that lay between Barra and Temei (or Temeison), part of their goods being left behind, and everything that they took with them quite spoilt by the rain. Here they had to spend some days again waiting for the rest of their baggage.

It is at this stage that Alvarez introduces into his story their adventures with the locusts, though in fact the event did not take place until three years later. They had often been told of the ravages committed by locusts in the country, and one day the plague actually descended: "We saw this sign, the sun became yellow and the shadow on the earth likewise, and the people were all dismayed." On the next day the locusts covered the ground for a distance of eight leagues, and the priests of the town came to ask the Portuguese for help against the invader. So, after consultation with da Lima, Alvarez collected together the priests and the town people and all the Portuguese, and carrying the Tabot and the Cross, singing the Litany and crying: "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us," they marched in solemn procession to meet the locusts.

The story may now be given in the picturesque words of Alvarez himself:

"With this cry and litany we went through

a plain of fields of wheat for the space of a third of a league to a small eminence, and there made an admonition which I had brought already written out that night with a requisition and admonition of excommunication on it, that within three hours they should begin to set out on their way, and go to the sea or the country of the Moors, or to mountains of no profit to the Christians; and, should they not do so, called upon and invoked the birds of the air and the animals of the earth, and the stones and tempests to disperse and break and devour their bodies. For this, I commanded to catch a quantity of the locusts, and thus made this admonition to those present, in their names, and those of the absent ones, and ordered them to be let go in peace.

"It pleased the Lord to hear the sinners. When we were returning to the town, because their road was to the sea from whence they came, there were so many coming after us, that it seemed as though they would break our ribs and heads driving against us, such were the thumps they inflicted on us. . . . Meanwhile a great storm arose from the sea, which met them, confronting them with violent rain and hail, which lasted quite three hours. The river and streams swelled very much, and, when they had ended running off, it was a wonderful thing that they measured two ells deep of their dead bodies, on the brink of the water of the great river, and likewise at the little brooks, a great multitude dead on the edges. The next day in the morning there

was not a single one alive in the whole country."

It is remarkable that Alvarez should have been so successful (according to his own account) in dealing with the locusts in this manner, for it was apparently laid down on high ecclesiastical authority in the XVIIth century that no one ought to excommunicate locusts because irrational creatures are not susceptible to ecclesiastical punishments !

CHAPTER V

DA LIMA'S MISSION (*continued*)

ARRIVAL AT THE KING'S CAMP

At Temeison, da Lima's patience failed him entirely, and he realised that it was no good trying to get on by means of the Bahrnagast's help. So, leaving the main body to get on as best they could, he rode off with half a dozen men out of the Bahrnagast's province into Tigre, where he hoped to enlist the sympathy and help of the Governor of that district, whom Alvarez calls the "Tigrimahom," meaning Tigre Makwonen, or chief of Tigre.

In da Lima's absence they managed to get their things up from Barra, and then sat down to wait for their chief's promised message, which did not reach them until July 28th. Then they had a two days' struggle to get porters and animals for their goods, which was only achieved by the good offices of an unexpectedly friendly local *shum*, with whose assistance they made their way "through mountains both rocky ridges and forests of trees without fruit . . . in fear of the tigers, and much vexed by the storms," for the rainy season was now at its worst.

They slept the night in a church for fear of wild animals, and, after a march of six or seven miles, on the next day came to the great river Mareb, which formed the northern boundary of Tigre.

Whilst waiting there, wondering how they could cross, they heard to their great joy the sound of drums and of many people approaching, and saw a party of some five hundred or six hundred men sent by the Governor of Tigre to help them on their way.

After some angry quarrelling as to who should ferry the luggage over—for the coast-province people thought their duty ended on their side of the river, whilst the men of Tigre maintained that their functions only began on their own side—they compromised by all taking it over together, and then the new-comers carried their loads along as fast as the mules could amble.

In a couple of days they reached a place between peaks that Alvarez calls Bafazem or Abafazem, probably Ava, the modern Yeha, about twenty miles north-east of Axum; thence passing the church on Mount St. Michael and a town called Angueha to Abacinete or Bacinete (probably Amba Sinaiti), where the customs of the women do not seem to have met with Alvarez' approval. He says: "The girls go from bad to worse. There are women of twenty or twenty-five years old, who have the breasts coming to their waists, and their body bare and covered with little beads. Some of the women of full size and age wear sheepskin suspended to their

shoulder, without its covering more than one side. . . . In the parts of Portugal and Spain people marry for love, and on account of seeing beautiful faces, and the things inside are hidden from them; in this country they can well marry on account of seeing everything quite certain."

About a league from a place he calls Maluk they met their chief on August 6th. They found da Lima and his little party very comfortably lodged by the Governor, who had apparently treated them far more liberally than his colleague of the coast province, but their inexperience of Abyssinian customs caused them to overlook the fact that he required remuneration in the shape of "presents" for any favours conferred. So that when they broached the inevitable and painful question of further transport, they were told that "the goods which we were taking to the Prester John, he (the Governor) would have them taken to him, and that our goods . . . we should take charge of them, and with that he dismissed us and went his way." Once again da Lima had to swallow his pride, and despatched two men after the Governor, bearing presents of swords and daggers, in return for which he got his transport and instructions to the people that the "Portuguese were to receive supplies of food all along their route."

They got under way again on August 9th, but now they began to suffer from the attacks of animals, which Alvarez describes as "tigers," which mauled two of the party. What these animals really were is not clear; they were

certainly not tigers, because none are found in Abyssinia. It is probable that they were either leopards or hyenas, possibly both, as the nature of the attacks described differ. Whatever they were, the Portuguese were very much afraid of them, and describe them as "pestilent animals."

Leaving this mountainous district they dropped down into more open and fertile country, where they came across the first of the rock-hewn churches for which Abyssinia is famous. This particular one was in charge of some very hospitable and worthy friars, and it is a great tribute to the strictness with which these Abyssinians kept their Sabbath (Saturday) that, though their gardens abounded with vegetables and fruits of all kinds, yet "because it was Saturday they could not gather anything to give us, asking us to pardon them," and so the Portuguese were fed on boiled cabbage of the day before and dry garlic—an unpleasant-sounding meal.

On August 13th, at a spot called Dongolo by the river Agula, they struck the route which three and a half centuries later was to be followed by Lord Napier's expedition; and, being near the great salt plains, they passed on the road caravans of mules coming from the salt-mines laden with bars of salt, which then formed the currency throughout the country, as it does yet to-day in certain districts. The salt was made up in bars about six inches long, four fingers wide and three fingers thick, and its purchasing power varied enormously in proportion to its distance from the salt-mines. Thus at the mines themselves

in that part of Abyssinia 120 to 130 of these bars were equivalent to 1 drachm (about $^1/_{10}$ ounce) of gold; at the market-place, where Alvarez met the caravan, which was quite close to the mines, the value had risen by 5 or 6 bars, and at the court in Shoa no more than 7, 6 or even 5 bars went to the drachm, according to the season. In Damot a good slave could be bought for 3 or 4 bars, and "on reaching the country of the slaves" they say they get a slave for a stone, and almost for a stone its weight in gold."

Shortly after leaving the town of Belete the captain, who had been despatched by the Governor of Tigre to convoy their baggage, apparently thought that he had gone far enough, and deposited it all "in the middle of a plain where there was much water." This not unnaturally annoyed the Portuguese, and, while they were arguing with the men, a friar with a large following sent by the emperor to assist his guests arrived, and a regular battle took place between the friar's people and the Tigre captain, wherein some blood was shed. This friar seems to have been the same man, Zaga-za-Ab, who was ultimately despatched as Ambassador to Portugal with the Portuguese on their return journey, and he appears to have been about as unsuitable for that mission as were the other persons acting in ambassadorial capacities at this time.

That night the party rested at a town called Corcora[1] (not far from Antalo), and then while

[1] The modern Gargara; not to be confused with Corcora in Angot, referred to later on.

the friar was collecting a fresh supply of mules and camels some of them pushed on, and, losing their way in the deep narrow gorges of the mountains, the mission got split into two. The party with which was Alvarez, seeing a fire in the distance, endeavoured to make their way to it, but " so many tigers followed us that it was a thing not to be believed, and . . . they came so close to us that . . . one might have struck them with a lance."

They passed a very unhappy night in the middle of an open plain, guarding the mules with drawn swords, and on the following day reached the town of Manadeley, inhabited mostly by Moslems, " all Moors tributary to Prester John." Alvarez says this was in the Doba country, and that here it was warm and they had got out of the rains. They must consequently have crossed the mountains and reached the eastern slopes of the range that separate the Abyssinian highlands from the low-lying stretches that extend thence to the Red Sea.

This is the more obvious from the statement he makes that there they were not far from the " country of the Moors," with whom the inhabitants had frequent small wars; and it was at this town, later on, that Alvarez arrived after a victory had been gained over the Moslems to find eight hundred heads suspended on trees along the path, so that " we felt fear and disgust at passing under them."

The inhabitants lived in dread of the Moslem invaders, and Alvarez tells a pathetic story of a

priest whom he found armed with poisoned arrows, and who, on being remonstrated with, replied by pointing out his church destroyed by fire, his farm empty, his cattle raided, and his burned bee-hives, which were his livelihood. It is a typical little picture which gives unfortunately a very true impression of the state of the unhappy border districts of Abyssinia, perpetually rent as they were by the continuous wars between Moslem and Christian.

After leaving Manadeley they reached the town of Farso, where they were well received; nuns came out to wash their feet "and drank of the water after they had washed them, and they washed their face with it, saying that we were holy Christians of Jerusalem."

They were very nearly destroyed a few days later by a happening which is well known to Abyssinian travellers, but which is so remarkable that it has to be seen to be believed—and then it is rather terrifying.

They were taking their midday meal in the shade of some trees by the side of a road running down the mountain-side: "It was very hot. The sun and day were very bright, and the river did not bring water enough to irrigate a garden." Amid this picture of pleasant restfulness they heard thunder a long way off; they thought nothing of it, when suddenly without any warning the river came down in flood from the hills "of the height of a lance (without any doubt) and quite straight and square," sweeping down before it trees, boulders and masses of rock, "stones

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as big as barrels of twelve almudes . . . it seemed that the earth was being overwhelmed and that the heavens were falling." With difficulty they saved themselves and salvaged their goods, and then wet and miserable and supperless withdrew up the hill to sleep near a village, where the inhabitants received them hospitably by throwing stones at them. Troubles still fell thickly on them, for at their next camping-ground they were attacked by "tigers;" their mules stampeded, and they lost two of them. This was on the Sabalete River, the boundary at that time between Tigre and Angot, and here they spent the first two days of September, crossing into Angot on the 3rd, when they passed through the town of Corcora—the second of that name.

In Angot they found that, in addition to bars of salt, iron was current as money. It was made up into pieces shaped like a shovel, and of these pieces from ten to twelve were equivalent to a drachm, one of them being worth six or seven pieces of salt.

At Ancona in Angot they discovered some remarkable churches of great size built inside caves in the hillside. One of these caves was of such dimensions, according to Alvarez, that "three large ships with their masts would find room in it," although the entrance to the cave was quite small. He climbed up to this by so "steep a path that we had to be pulled by a rope, and the climb took him over six hours, near dying from the great ascent, and

with the great cold there was, God protected me."

A day's journey away were the wonderful rock-hewn churches of Lalibala, extraordinary constructions hewn out of the solid rock. Alvarez does not appear to have visited them on this occasion, but later on, in the course of one of his subsequent journeys; and the description he gives is not only the first known to us, but is wonderfully vivid and realistic, and has been fully confirmed by the very few travellers who up to this time have penetrated to the place.

As no other description of these remarkable monolithic constructions prior to their damage by the Moslems exists, it may be of interest to quote some of it. Alvarez says that there were ten of them, and describing one—that of Golgotha—he writes: "It is in this manner: all excavated in the stone itself, 120 spans in length, and seventy two spans in width. The ceiling of this church rests on five supports, two on each side, and one in the centre, like fives of dice . . . the sides also are worked in a fine fashion, also the windows, and the doors with all the tracery, which could be told, so that neither a jeweller in silver nor a worker of wax in wax could do more work. . . . The gallery which goes round the church is like a cloister and lower than the body of the church . . . there are three windows on each side, that is to say, at that height which the church is higher than the gallery, and as much as the body of the church extends, so much is excavated below and to as much depth as there is height above the floor of the church. . . .

This church also possesses a separate chapel, almost a church; this has naves on six supports, three on each side. It is very well constructed with much elegance: the middle nave is raised and arched, its windows and doorways are well wrought. . . . It has another chapel . . . with many windows. This church and its chapels have their altars and canopies, with their supports, made of the rock itself."

The church of St. Saviour he describes as 200 spans long and 120 wide inside. "It has five naves in each one, seven square columns very well worked with arches which hang down a span below the vaulted roof. . . . In the principal height of these naves there is much tracery . . . roses and other graceful works; on the sides it has very pretty windows with much tracery, long and narrow in the middle . . . on the outside part of this church are seven buttresses with arches which are twelve palms distant from the wall of the church, and from buttress to buttress an arch, and above the church on these arches a vault, constructed in such manner that if it were built of pieces and soft stone, it could not be straighter nor better constructed, nor with more work about it."

There was a court or cloister sixty palms wide all round the church, and the entrance to the church consisted of eighty steps cut down through the rock "of a width that ten men can go side by side and of the height of a lance or more."

The other churches which Alvarez describes at length were equally wonderful, and he was

evidently so much impressed by them, and considered them so remarkable, that he feared lest his descriptions should not be believed. So he says: "It wearied me to write more of these works, because it seems to me that they will not believe me if I write more, and because as to what I have already written they may accuse me of untruth, therefore I swear by God in whose power I am that all that is written is the truth, and there is much more than what I have written, and I have left it that they may not tax me with its being falsehood."

He need not have been alarmed, for several centuries later the churches still stood, and stand to-day, to bear witness to the truth of his reports; sadly damaged it is true by the ravages of time, neglect, and the fire and axe of the Moslem invader, but intact in their main features.

Who cut these great works out of the rock is still a mystery; they are generally attributed to King Lalibala, who lived in the twelfth century, and is supposed to have spent twenty-four years on the work, aided by white labour. The Abyssinian legend says he was helped by angels who toiled at night while the mortal day workers rested, and for every foot of work done during the day the workmen found three had been done while they slept.

The probability is that they were commenced very much earlier than the twelfth century, and that the work lasted a long while, and was perhaps completed by Lalibala; but this remains for the present a mere surmise.

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But to return to the journey of the Portuguese. Some three leagues from Ancona they got into more trouble with their baggage, and when the friar who was guiding them endeavoured to obtain assistance he was beaten by the indignant villagers; they had to proceed without it until they could find people willing to go back and fetch it for them. While waiting in the town of Ingabelu "tigers sprang into the town," carried off a boy, stampeded their animals, and devoured one of their donkeys.

Worse, however, was to befall them, for two days later some three hundred villagers made a massed attack upon them. The unhappy Portuguese were marching in a hollow among some hills, when suddenly from the heights above them volleys of stones rained down on them from three sides. They "threw stones so thickly that they seemed to rain upon us (well did we think of our deaths)." Nearly every member of the party was wounded; some had their heads broken, and some of the injured were even taken off as prisoners, while Alvarez and others made their escape. The next day they caught up da Lima, who had been on ahead, and came back with him to the scene of battle. Here they were joined by the Ras of Angot, who took charge of them and carried them off for a much-needed rest at his own place, where they were plied with abundance of food and drink.

The food, however, or some of it, was hardly such as to tempt a fastidious appetite, for the great delicacies were dishes containing "an

admixture of cow-dung and of gall, which in this country they consider an esteemed food, and only great personages eat it."

It is not astonishing that they were unable to eat of these particular dainties, nor of the raw breast of beef which followed, but as we are told that wine was passed round freely, together with fine fat roast fowls and fat beef boiled with cabbage, the party seem to have been well provided for.

Justice was moreover done on the villagers who had stoned them, these being fined to the extent of two mules, a cow and eight pieces of stuff.

They passed close to the great table mountain of Amba Geshen (Geche Amba Nagast—royal amba of Geche), famous in Abyssinian history as the home, or rather prison, in which were confined most of the members of the royal family.

Although the object of this barbarous custom is fairly obvious, namely to minimise the risk of rebellion and conspiracy among or on behalf of the other members of the royal family, it is by no means clear when or how the custom originated.

Alvarez of course gives the native legend as the true reason; it is a pleasant one, and worth recording as an example of the Abyssinian—and Portuguese—belief in the miraculous. According to this legend it was revealed by angels to King Abraham, who lived in the fourth century, and to whom the angels for forty years administered bread and wine for the sacrament, "that

all his sons should be shut up in a mountain, and that none should remain except the first-born, the heir, and that this should be done forever to all the sons of the Prester of the country and his successors; because if this was not so done there would be great difficulty in the country, and they would rise up and seize parts of it, and would not obey the heir, and would kill him. He being frightened at such a revelation, and reflecting where such a mountain could be found, it was again told him in revelation to order his country to be searched, and to look at the highest mountains, and that mountain on which they saw wild goats on the rocks, looking as if they were going to fall below, was the mountain on which the princes were to be shut up.

As Geshen—which is a few miles from Magdala—seemed to fit this description it was chosen by the king, and served for ever afterwards as a royal prison.

Unfortunately for the truth of the legend, it is necessary to state that Geshen was not in fact used for this purpose until after the Xth century, probably not indeed until the XIIIth !

Up to 968 A.D. the princes were incarcerated on the amba of Debra Damo, far away in Tigre in the north, and Bruce gives a much earlier date to the inauguration of the custom, which he states was imposed by that masterful lady, Makeda, the Queen of Sheba, whose union with Solomon resulted in the birth of Menelik, the founder of the Abyssinian dynasty more than 900 years B.C. The imprisonment of the royal

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family is stated to have been the last act of her reign, and to have been "intended to prevent some disorders among the princes of her house that she had observed frequently to happen in the house of David at Jerusalem."

Be that as it may, the custom was undoubtedly an ancient one, but it was rudely interrupted in 968 A.D. when all the princes on Debra Damo save one were massacred by the rebellious Falasha, under their queen, Judith.

For the next three hundred years, while the rightful heirs of the house of Solomon were limited to ruling over the province of Shoa, the custom seems to have lapsed, but on the restoration of this line in 1268 A.D. it was started again by Yekuno Amlak. This king had conceived the idea of letting his descendants rule alternately for a year a time; one of his sons, however, disliking the notion, had proposed to incarcerate all the family (including his father), according to the old custom, and seize the kingdom for himself entirely. So the king nipped the incipient plot in the bud by sending his over-ambitious son and all the rest of his family to languish on Geshen, the associations of Debra Damo being evidently too painful.

Here they and their descendants remained until 1540, and it was near here that Alvarez and his companions camped, and from here that the messengers and the escaped prisoner emerged.

To anticipate events a little, it may be said here that another massacre of the princes took place on

Geshen in 1540, this time by the Moslems, and the custom lapsed again for another one hundred years, until in 1640 Wechne (in Belessen) was chosen by Fasilidas as a prison for his rebel brother Claudius and other troublesome or too eminent Abyssinians, this action being inspired by, "reflecting on the ancient usages of the Empire, and how much royal blood might be daily saved by sequestering the descendants of the imperial family upon the mountain." A pleasant picture of family feeling.

And so it remained until 1856, when the Emperor Theodore repeated the two former episodes, and once again massacred all the unhappy inhabitants of the amba.

The confinement of the princes inspired Dr. Johnson's book, *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, or the Happy Valley*, than which a more misleading picture could hardly be imagined. Instead of living in a warm and pleasant valley surrounded by every comfort, as described by Johnson, they were imprisoned on the top of a mountain, amid every condition of misery, privation and cold; the provisions and clothing destined for them were diverted by the Governor, and they had hardly enough to eat. No one was allowed to communicate with them, and, even if they wished it, it was practically impossible to do so, for the sides of these ambas, a formation common in Abyssinia, were utterly inaccessible, and the only means of approach were one or two paths so steep and narrow that in some cases the traveller had to be hauled up in a basket.

On passing near the foot of Geshen the party

were led by their guides too close to one of the entrances, and they were immediately assailed by volleys of stones, attacked and scattered in all directions. Alvarez spent the night in a hut belonging to one of the guards, and in the morning this man took him through some trees to where thick bushes masked a wicket-door in the cliff wall, and said to him: "If any of you were to pass inside this door there would be nothing for it but to cut off his feet and his hands, and put out his eyes and leave him lying there . . . if we did not do this we should pay with our lives, because we are the guardians of this door."

The "hint" was sufficient, and Alvarez naively remarks that they at once mounted and rode off down to the road to try and discover the rest of the party.

Some time afterwards, when the presence of the Portuguese had become known in the country, a friar brought a letter from one of the princes to the Prester, and, as he was suspected really of desiring to invoke Portuguese aid for the princes, he and his two hundred guards were flogged during a fortnight, the friar receiving his punishment every other day, and half the guards being flogged daily.

From Geshen, da Lima and his party travelled to Lake Haiq, where they were immensely impressed by their first view of hippopotami, and a huge fish which they likened to a conger. "It has the highest head that could be described, and formed like a large toad, and the skin on its head looks like the skin of a dog-fish . . . it is the fattest

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MAGDALA

The great mountain fortress and one-time capital of Abyssinia, near which both da Lima's and da Gama's Expeditions passed.

and most savoury fish that could be found in the world."

In this lake is a large island on which is the monastery of St. Stephen, rendered famous by the miracles of the great Abyssinian national Saint, Tekla Haymanot—*inter alia* he is supposed to have walked on the water across to the island, and at the place where he took off his shoes a rose-tree grew up and still exists.

Although Alvarez does not mention the place, they must have passed close to Magdala, and then, after passing another lake, which was probably Ardibo, they entered upon country among mountains where they suffered much from great heat during the day and great cold at night, and where the people were very wild and uncivilised, the men wearing only a small strip of ox-hide, and the women "a cloth a little bit bigger than that of the men here cover what they can of what God has given them; the rest shows."

They had to sit up all one night "with their lances keeping off the tigers which fought with us energetically," and then the Ambassador and his recalcitrant second-in-command started the disputes which were to have such an unhappy influence on the fate of the mission. During their halts they sat apart in two groups, and would not speak to each other.

September was now drawing to a close, and the end of the rainy season was at hand. They reached the limits of the kingdom of Amhara on October 1st and arrived at the terrific pass known then as now as "The Gates" that leads

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into Shoa. So steep and narrow is the track in one part known as the "Death of the Asses" that men have to crawl on their hands and knees, and the bodies of mules and oxen are always found there that have fallen on the fearful path.

They were now nearing the end of their journey, and October 3rd they slept opposite the celebrated monastery of Debra Libanos, the most famous in all Abyssinia. It was founded by Tekla Haymanot, and is the seat of the tchege or head of all the monastic orders in the land, the second only to the Abuna in the episcopal hierarchy.

They saw the camp of the Negus far off in the distance on October 11th, and on the 16th they actually reached it, after one of the most arduous and painful journeys of which we have record, lasting as it did six months, three and a half of which were in the rainy season, and passing over incredibly difficult country with little help, and amid much hostility.

Three days after their arrival at the king's camp (that is on October 20th) the Portuguese were summoned before him, and, although they did not see him, nor indeed for another month, the scene is sufficiently striking as described by Alvarez to be worth describing.

Thinking they were about to meet the king, the Portuguese arrayed themselves for the occasion, "we dressed ourselves and arrayed ourselves very well, God be praised," and then rode off on their mules to a number of red and white tents pitched in a large plain. In front

of the tents were rows of arches covered over with red and white cloth alternately, and all round was an immense concourse of some 20,000 people. Among them were "many canons and church people with caps like mitres, but with points upwards of coloured silk stuffs and some of them of scarlet cloth. . . . In front were horses . . . saddled and caparisoned with rich brocade coverings. . . . These horses had diadems high above their ears, they came down to the bits of the bridle with large plumes on them. . . . Behind were honourable men who were not clothed, except from the waist downwards."

As is the custom to-day when visiting the palace of the empress, so then did a number of men armed with whips run in front of them to clear the way, and so conducted they came through the crowd before the tents. Here they dismounted, and officers, some sixty in number began to run to and fro between the Portuguese and the emperor, carrying messages of greeting and goodwill. These men must have made a picturesque group, for they were dressed in shirts and good silk cloth, covered with lions' skins, and above the lions' skins "collars of gold badly wrought, and other jewels and false stones, and rich pieces round their necks." They also wore girdles of silk, coloured ribands with long fringes reaching to the ground.

After the principal messenger had asked da Lima three times who he was and where he came from, and had been told each time that the ambassador had messages from his king for

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the emperor, he asked what the messages were. Da Lima got impatient and said that he would give his message to the emperor only; he was somewhat nonplussed when the emperor retorted (through the messenger) by asking to see the presents he had brought!

So after some consultation these presents were duly handed over, and then the chief justice of the court made a speech saying that "all were to give thanks to the Lord because Christians had come together with Christians." And then the huge crowds "gave a great shout as in praise of God, and it lasted a good while," after which the Portuguese were dismissed to their tents which were pitched near by.

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CHAPTER VI

DA LIMA'S MISSION (*continued*)

AT THE KING'S CAMP

Between the time of the departure of Matheus from Abyssinia in 1510 and the arrival of Dom Rodrigo da Lima at the headquarters of the Negus in 1520, much of importance had happened, a knowledge of which is essential in order to understand the nature of the reception given to the Portuguese.

When the Empress Helena had despatched her ambassador, King Lebna Dengel was a boy of thirteen years of age, and of course he had no say in the matter. But as soon as he reached an age when he was able to take the reins of government himself he made it clear that he had no intention of following the peaceful policy towards his Moslem neighbours laid down by the astute Helena. He announced his intention of launching a campaign against the renowned warrior Mahfuz, Emir of Harar, and his ally, the King of Adal; and set to work to organise a powerful army for the purpose. Helena had opposed this policy vigorously, but when she realised that the young king was not to be deflected

from his purpose she assisted in the equipment of the army by every means in her power.

Lebna Dengel forthwith marched into Adal, and displaying considerable qualities of generalship caught his enemies in a ravine and blocking both ends of it swept down to the attack.

The battle that followed is reminiscent of a page of Froissart; desperate hand-to-hand fighting where no quarter was given was the order of the day, and many stories of single combats between notable men on either side have been handed down. The most remarkable of them, and the one that decided the result of the day, was that between the Emir Mahfuz and an Abyssinian monk, Gabriel Andreas by name. This monk, a man of immense strength and stature, had had his tongue partly cut out by the Emperor Naod for his license of speech, but this does not appear to have impaired his loyalty or his fighting powers. Wielding an immense sword he cut his way to Mahfuz and after a great fight killed him by a blow which severed his head from his body. At this the fight became a flight and a slaughter, and an immense amount of booty fell into the hands of the conquerors.

Inter alia, they captured the green banner of Islam and a magnificent tent of black velvet which had been sent as a present to Mahfuz by the shereef of Mecca; this tent later on served as a chapel for da Lima's mission.

The King of Adal, warned by a vision, had saved himself by flight before the commencement

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of the battle, but of Mahfuz' army nothing was left, and Lebna Dengel pillaged the kingdom of Adal at his leisure.

In addition to this striking success the Portuguese fleet, under the Viceroy of India, Dom Lopo Soarez, burned the town of Zeila at about the same time—da Lima's mission being then on board.

So that by the time that da Lima arrived Lebna Dengel had come to feel himself secure from his Moslem foes, and was by no means eager to conclude an alliance with the Portuguese, especially as the terms which Matheus had been authorised by Helena to offer had been exceedingly onerous for the Abyssinians, dictated as they had been by fear at a time of impending emergency.

On the other hand, Lebna Dengel did not desire to return a blunt negative to the Portuguese mission, and so he adopted the policy which is exactly characteristic of the Abyssinians even to-day, and delayed and prevaricated and shilly-shallied for week after week and month after month.

He started the process by keeping the mission waiting for a month before meeting them face to face. During this period they were sent for and then sent back several times, and on the first of these occasions Alvarez quaintly remarks: "We all returned like the peacock when he makes a wheel (*i.e.* spreads his tail) and is gay, and when he lowers it becomes sad; as pleased as we were at going so sad were we at remaining".

They had repeated interviews at a distance, the conversations being conducted by officers who ran backwards and forwards between the parties, carrying messages of the most trivial and irritating character.

In the first place the king appears to have grumbled very much at the presents, and especially at the absence of any firearms amongst them. This was hardly surprising, for they certainly seem to have been a rather poor collection of gifts, and the Ambassador had to explain at length that the original consignment was very much finer, but had been lost in the Red Sea.

The Portuguese had brought with them some bales of pepper to be used as money to purchase supplies for themselves, but the king cast covetous eyes on these, and eventually actually asked for them, so four out of the five bales were handed over to him. They seem even to have been kept short of food in order to persuade them to meet the king's wishes, although at first supplies in plenty were sent to them, including "a calf whole in bread, that is to say, in a pie, so well dressed that we could not get tired of it."

It may well be imagined that the patience of the Portuguese was sorely tried after their long adventurous journey to be treated in this way, and in lieu of entering upon discussions of policy and treaty making to be asked such questions as "whether the King of Portugal was married, and how many wives he had, and how many fortresses in India," or "who had

taught the Moors to make fire-locks and bombards, and whether they fired with them at the Portuguese, and the Portuguese at them, and who was most afraid, the Moors or the Portuguese." The last question must have been particularly galling.

In an endeavour to interest or impress the Negus, da Lima on one occasion ordered two of his men to give an exhibition of sword-play before him, and not being satisfied with the skill displayed had a bout himself with Dom Jorge d'Abreu. On another occasion they seem to have sung and danced before him, a performance which can scarcely have added to their dignity in the eyes of the Abyssinians.

For some time they were not allowed to have any intercourse with the other Europeans at the court, and one of them, who had come to see them en route, was chained up, and escaped to their tents with difficulty. These Europeans consisted of Pedro da Covilham, a Venetian painter Branca Leone, whom Alvarez refers to as "a great gentleman though a painter," and some sixteen others, Spaniards, Genoese and Greek, a Basque and a German—who had been imprisoned at Jedda by the Turks, and having seized a vessel crossed the Red Sea and made their way into Abyssinia from Massawa.

And still the delays went on. More arguments followed about the presents ; the king sent to ask for some of their personal effects which had taken his fancy, and whether at his instigation or not people broke into their tents at night and stole a

quantity of their possessions on at least two occasions. Their complaints were countered by an accusation that they had carried off to their tents by force a young girl, and as Alvarez does not deny the truth of this charge it is hardly surprising that their popularity, never great, seems to have suffered a further blow.

To their reiterated demands for a personal interview or for leave to depart, the Negus, who was doubtless consulting with his people as to what to do with them, sent evasive answers, and on one occasion somewhat curtly asked " who had bid us come here, that Matheus had not been to Portugal by order of the Prester John nor of Queen Helena."

The only things that seem really to have pleased or interested the monarch were Father Alvarez' instruments for making the Communion wafers, and his vestments for saying Mass. He had to dress up in them and undress several times, and to explain over and over again the use and meaning of each separate article, while the king watched and listened from behind a screen.

All this time they had not seen the king, nor had they been able to discuss any business of State, although they had been repeatedly sent for and kept waiting for hours outside the king's quarters; once indeed they were called up for a fruitless visit in the middle of the night, and left exposed to the cold winds that render a night out of doors on the Abyssinian Mountains far from agreeable.

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It was not until November 19th that they were admitted into the presence of the king, and then they were kept waiting outside the gate for three hours.

At last, however, they passed through the various enclosures and gateways that guarded the royal precincts, and came to a doorway hung with curtains of rich texture.

"Having passed these last we found a large and rich dais of very splendid carpets. In front of this dais were other curtains of much greater splendour, and . . . they opened them in two parts . . . and there we saw Prester John sitting on a platform of six steps, very richly adorned. He had on his head a high crown of gold and silver, that is to say one piece of gold and another of silver placed vertically, and a silver cross in his hand; there was a piece of blue tafetan before his face which covered his mouth and beard, and from time to time they lowered it, and the whole of his face appeared, and again they raised it. At his right hand he had a page with a flat silver cross in his hand, with figures pierced in it with a graving tool. . . . The Prester was dressed in a rich robe of brocade, and a silk shirt of wide sleeves which looked like a pelisse. From his knees downward he had a rich cloth well spread out like a bishop's apron, and he was sitting as they paint God the Father on the wall.

"Besides the page with the cross there stood on each side of him another, each with a drawn sword in his hand.

"In age, complexion and stature he is a young man,[1] not very dark. His complexion might be chestnut or bay, not very dark in colour. He is an elegant man of middling stature; they said that he was twenty-three years of age, and he looks like that. His face is round, the eyes large, the nose high in the middle, and his beard is beginning to grow. In his presence and state he fully looks like the great lord that he is."

Many people were grouped about the hall: courtiers, soldiers, pages, groups of attendants bearing lighted candles; and amid this scene of barbaric splendour the Portuguese Ambassador and his nine followers, decked out in velvet and silk and gold, presented to the African ruler the letters from the King of Portugal, and entered upon their momentous discussions.

Momentous indeed they were, for the whole future of the ancient empire hinged upon them. They were doomed to failure at that time; the Abyssinian king was to be stripped of all his magnificence and hunted like a wild beast from one mountain hiding-place to another, and was to die a fugitive separated from his wife and people, one son killed, another imprisoned by his Moslem foes. Yet out of that failure sprang success, for the seed sown by da Lima was to blossom twenty years later into the material assistance that was to replace the king's son on his throne and save his empire from the domination of Islam.

[1] In fact he was about twenty-three at this time.

CHAPTER VII

DA LIMA'S MISSION (*continued*)

DETENTION IN ABYSSINIA

The record of the Portuguese mission during the next five and a half years is incomplete and confusing, and it is by no means clear why they should have remained there for so long a period.

The three months following their reception by the emperor seem to have been passed in a series of undignified wrangles both between the emperor and the Portuguese, and among the Portuguese themselves.

Da Lima continually vaunted the wealth and power of his sovereign, pressed the emperor for answers to the letters he had brought him, begged for leave to depart, and brought the mission into disrepute by his public quarrels with Jorge d'Abreu, his second-in-command. Lebnal Dengel actually had to interfere in an effort to make peace between them, and the general feeling among the Abyssinians seems to have been largely on d'Abreu's side.

They do not appear to have made any sort of impression on the Abyssinians; even in wrestling,

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in which they endeavoured to display their ability, their two champions were overthrown by a native wrestler, one of them having his arm and the other his leg broken.

The Portuguese who had his leg broken was Lazaro d'Andrade, the painter; and the emperor was so distressed by the accident that he sent him a dress of rich brocade. He of the broken arm was Arias Diaz, who returned to Abyssinia with da Gama's expedition twenty years later, and was subsequently appointed leader of the Portuguese remnant. A third man was asked to encounter the Abyssinian champion, but "he did not wrestle, because . . . he was afraid"—for which one can hardly blame him.

Alvarez does not make any reference to interviews with Queen Helena, or to any activities of hers, which is the more remarkable inasmuch as she was the person responsible for bringing the Portuguese to Abyssinia. Possibly her influence had waned considerably owing to the extravagant terms she is alleged to have promised through Matheus to the King of Portugal for his assistance, and to the fact that the king had—at least temporarily—crushed his enemies so thoroughly by his great victories in 1517. The memory of that victory was strong during the stay of da Lima's mission, and the head of the defeated Moslem leader, Mahfuz, was still being exhibited on a spear at the king's court.

Queen Helena died in 1525, the year before da Lima's departure, and with her death disappeared the strongest foreign influence at court.

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At last, early in 1521, the king announced his intention of sending the mission back to Portugal armed with replies to the letters they had brought. The preparation of these replies was a work of no little difficulty; they were written on parchment in Abyssinian (probably in Giz), in Arabic, and in Portuguese, and each letter was in duplicate, one copy of each being enclosed in a bag of velvet brocade.

We are told that "they spent a long time over them because their usage is not to write to one another and their messages, communications and embassages are all by word of mouth. With us they began to acquire the manner of writing, and, when they were writing, all the books of the epistles of St. Paul, of St. Peter, and St. James were present, and those that they esteemed as the most lettered studied them, and then began to write their letters in the Abyssinian language . . . and Pedro de Covilham turned them into Portuguese, and . . . the clerk of the embassy wrote them, and I . . . assisted in arranging the language, and it is very laborious to translate the Abyssinian language into Portuguese."

There were also letters to the Viceroy of India, and others to the Pope; and, when all this correspondence was completed, the Prester summoned before him the embassy and also those Europeans who had previously arrived at his court.

He started by presenting the latter with costly gifts, rich cloths of velvet and silk, and many ounces of gold, and promised to send other gifts

to the members of the embassy. They "seeing how well they did for those Franks who had come to them as runaways, thought they would do better for us, and we made sure that they had prepared for us dresses of brocade."

But their hopes in this matter were not fulfilled, for the ambassador, who was having one of his periodical public quarrels with d'Abreu, offended the Prester by refusing bluntly to make up his differences with him, or to give him his share of the mules and supplies that had been sent to them for the journey.

So the Prester "despatched them with much reserve," sending them only some ounces of gold, and a large crown of gold and silver for the King of Portugal, concerning which Alvarez remarks that its "value is not so great as its size."

Indeed, the emperor did not even wait to give them a farewell audience, but started off from his camp early in the morning, leaving the Portuguese to go off as they pleased.

Even the elements seem to have given them an unpropitious start, for a storm blew down all their tents, so that they commenced their return journey a day sooner than anticipated, viz., on Shrove Tuesday, February 12th, 1521.

On the very next day "sin began to excite fresh quarrels," and something of a fight seems to have taken place amongst them, several were wounded, and the mission divided itself into two parties which, journeying separately, reached Manadeley without further incident about the middle of April.

At Abacinete, where they had had trouble on the way up, they appear again to have had anything but a friendly reception from "the people, who were not tender-hearted, for here at times they wished to throw stones at us, and in effect they did so."

A temporary reconciliation was effected here among the Ambassador's party, and they pushed on altogether to Barua within a few days' march of the coast, where they awaited news of the arrival of the ships which were to take them home.

Time passed, the end of the monsoon arrived, but never a sign of the Portuguese fleet. Weary with the strain of waiting, and dismayed with thought of having been abandoned in that wild country, their nerves seem to have got on edge, and the most serious quarrel they had yet had occurred, developing into a pitched battle between the two parties of Portuguese. The Ambassador had refused to allow d'Abreu and his followers to have any provisions, in spite of the strong representations of the Abyssinian chiefs who accompanied them. D'Abreu consequently led an attack on da Lima's quarters in the night, firearms being freely used, and, while the front entrance was being battered down, da Lima and his party escaped by the back and took refuge among the Abyssinians. The latter were now at their wits' end to know what to do with their quarrelsome guests, and so, as there seemed no hope of reconciliation among them, and no chance of their being taken off by their compatriots, it

was decided to take them all back to the king's court, and they set off once again into the interior, with feelings that may well be imagined.

Again they had to pass through Abacinete, and again the population of this town manifested their dislike in no uncertain manner. But on this occasion, instead of throwing stones, the friars descended from the mountains armed with bows and arrows " and it was like a field battle, and there were many wounded on both sides."

However, their escort captured the town, and then sacked it, and after administering this salutary lesson the expedition pushed on in two parties to Manadeley, which they must have reached about the end of November, 1521.

At Manadeley they were met by the governor, who had apparently been to Shoa to report to the emperor what had passed, and a stormy interview took place, at which the governor reproved the Abyssinians' chief for having brought back the Portuguese, and " bawled a good deal at the Ambassador and Jorge d'Abreu, and requested them to return the letters they were carrying to the King of Portugal ; while between da Lima and d'Abreu some very ugly words passed."

After which the mission was yet again turned round and sent back to the coast once more in two parties, da Lima being quartered at Barua, and d'Abreu at Barra, about a day's march away.

It is not clear for how long the Portuguese remained in their quarters near the coast at

Barua, where they arrived towards the end of 1521. Nor is it clear why they left that place to return to the king's headquarters at Shoa.

But unfortunately for themselves they certainly did do so, for on April 15th, 1522, they were in the midst of saying a special Easter Mass before the king when letters arrived for them from Dom Luiz de Meneses, the commander of a Portuguese fleet, instructing them to be at Massawa by April 15th as he could not wait after that date. The letter also informed them of the death of King Manuel of Portugal, which had occurred in December 1521.

This double blow greatly disturbed the Portuguese, for they not only realised that they would suffer a further period of detention in the country as a result of their missing the fleet, but they feared the effect on their fortunes which would be caused when the Prester learned of the death of the monarch who had sent them.

They were indeed doubtful as to whether they should tell the Prester or not, but, realising that he would hear the news from travelling Moorish merchants, they decided to impart the information themselves.

So they indulged in Abyssinian methods of manifesting their grief, shaving each other's heads but not their faces, and refusing to eat —to such effect that the Prester sent to comfort them, and ordered three days' general mourning in the country.

To their earnest entreaties to be allowed again to depart, however, he replied with the usual

promises, which suffered the usual delays, and it was not until nearly two months later that the party was able to start off hot-foot for the coast.

Of course, the fleet had sailed by the time they arrived (probably in July or August, 1522), but Dom Luiz had left supplies for them, including a quantity of pepper and letters for the Prester and for themselves, urging them not to leave the coast because another fleet would return to take them off in the following year.

The Ambassador seems to have thought he would propitiate the emperor by making him a present of the pepper—a most valuable form of currency—which had been brought, and, obviously wishing to secure the whole credit of this for himself, he started off on yet another—the fourth !—journey back to the court, accompanied only by Alvarez and one other. This journey lasted from September 1st to end of November, 1522.

Having duly presented the letters and pepper to the monarch, Alvarez records that "we got no answer whatever," which must have mortified da Lima extremely.

There is now a gap in Alvarez' narrative, and it is impossible to fix with any accuracy the happenings during the year 1523. Some time during that year, probably towards the end of it, the Ambassador and Alvarez journeyed to Dara, a town of Shoa, not far from the king's headquarters. Whilst there they were requested by the monarch to write in Abyssinian characters the names of the various countries delineated

on a map of the world which they had given him on arrival. Alvarez seems to have feared that his country would not look large enough on the map to impress the king, so he described Portugal as Lisbon, and Spain as Seville, a delightful artifice which does not seem to have deceived Lebna Dengel at all.

For he sent to say that the Kings of Portugal and Spain were "sovereigns of few lands," and expressed some doubt as to whether they would really be able to drive the Turks out of the Red Sea. To remedy this he proposed to write to the King of Spain to tell him to build a fortress in Zeila; to the King of Portugal to build one in Massawa; and the King of France to build one in Suakin—then with the aid of the Prester's forces the Red Sea and Arabian coast could be adequately dealt with.

The Ambassador and Alvarez returned to Barua, where the rest of the party had been left, and here they awaited the arrival of Portuguese vessels, with what impatience may be well understood. But the period of the monsoon passed, and no fleet appeared, so that their hopes of being able ever to leave the wild country in which they were marooned sank ever lower.

Hearing of their predicament the Prester sent messengers to instruct them to proceed to Axum, and here they seem to have spent some eight months during the latter part of 1524 and the beginning of 1525.

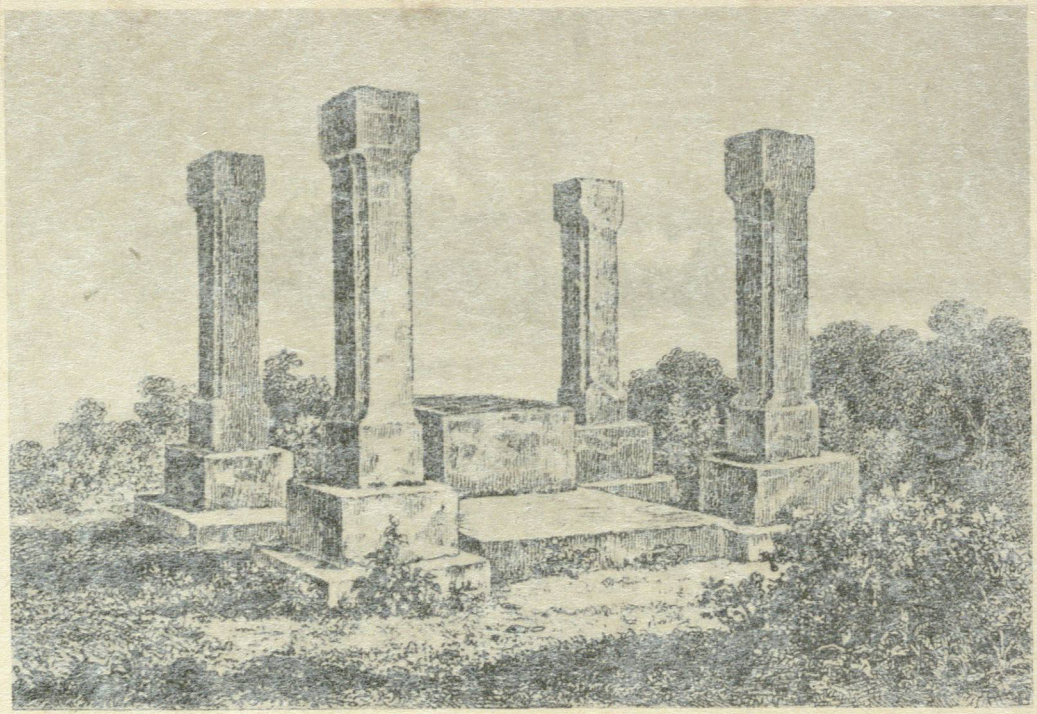
Axum was, at that time, as indeed it is to-day,

the most famous and interesting town in Abyssinia. It is a very ancient city, for it is mentioned in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, which was written in the Ist century, and it was the ancient capital of the country, the seat of the old Axumite dynasty, and until comparatively modern times the crowning place of the Abyssinian monarchs.

It was probably founded by the Himyarites some centuries before the time of Christ, and it experienced Grecian civilisation before coming under Christian influence; ancient Sabaean inscriptions and old Greek coins which have been found on the site provide ample evidence of this.

Alvarez was fortunate enough to see it a few years before the devastating hordes of Islam destroyed so much of its magnificence in 1534, and, as his is the only European account extant of Axum as it was before that date, it is particularly valuable.

He tells us of stone churches and palaces; of huge obelisks and monolithic columns sixty-four ells high; of wonderful carved stone chairs or thrones, of which one group of twelve was used by the twelve judges of the country; of carved stone figures of lions, dogs and birds; of water-tanks and towers, and a great enclosure for the king's lions. And that he spoke the truth is evident from the reports made by more recent travellers, for the ruins of this magnificence are there for all to see, and some of the huge monoliths are still standing to-day, though wealth and importance have gone from the town, and its



THE THRONE AT AXUM

Axum was until recently the crowning place of all Abyssinian Emperors. The remains of the old throne are still extant; it was partially destroyed during the Moslem invasion—probably in 1530.

people do not now number more than about five thousand souls.

Of course, Alvarez gives us as history a wealth of legend regarding the ancient story of Axum, which, according to then current belief, had been the "city, chamber and abode" of the Queen of Sheba (whom he describes as Queen Saba). In the principal church he found "a very great chronicle written in the language of the country, and it stated in its commencement how it had been written first in Hebrew, and afterwards put into Greek, and from Greek into Chaldee, and from Chaldee into the Abyssinian tongue."

This chronicle told the story of the visit of the Queen to Solomon, and of the birth of their son Menelik on the Queen's return to Axum; of how she sent Solomon gold and ebony for the embellishment of the great temple, of how the young Menelik returned to Jerusalem, where apparently he made himself extremely obnoxious to the Hebrews, and of his ultimate return to his Kingdom of Axum.

It was recorded that the return of the youthful Menelik to Axum was accomplished in much state, an official for the direction of each branch of the royal household being chosen from each of the twelve Tribes of Israel. It is claimed to-day, as it was claimed in the time of Alvarez, that these offices were made hereditary, and that the descendants of the original office-holders were and are still living, and Alvarez says that they "honour themselves much as Israelites and gentlemen and our relations."

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CHAPTER VIII

DEPARTURE OF DA LIMA'S MISSION

Some very interesting features described by Alvarez are a number of great stone chests with stone lids, which he says were the treasure chests of the great queen ; one's thoughts are inevitably carried to Sir Henry Rider Haggard's description of the stone chests full of diamonds discovered in the heart of Africa by the traveller who penetrated to " King Solomon's Mines."

Traditions recounted to Alvarez also attributed another royal and famous inhabitant to Axum about a thousand years later. Queen Candace was supposed to have been born in a village half a league away, and to have established her principal residence in the city, to which she introduced Christianity. She is stated to have been converted by her major-domo, a eunuch who had first of all been baptised by St. Philip when on a mission to collect revenues for his mistress from the land of Gaza, which had been given by Solomon to his son by the Queen of Sheba.

And, basing themselves on this story, the

Abyssinians claimed that they were the first Christians in the world, and that by their conversion was fulfilled the prophecy: "Ethiopia shall arise and stretch forth her hands to God."

Alvarez saw the enormous church which the queen was supposed to have built, within the enclosing walls of which "are handsome habitations of terraced buildings, and all spout out their water by strong figures of lions and dogs of stone."

In another church was the tomb of the Queen Candace's confessor, and two days' journey away lay the country of Sabaim, whence the Queen of Sheba obtained the ebony which she sent to Solomon.

In yet another church a few miles distant was buried a monarch whom Alvarez describes as a "King of Greece," who abandoned his royal dignities and abode in a cave to do penance the rest of his days. Alvarez visited this cave when it was surrounded by three thousand cripples, blind men and lepers who had come to be healed by the miraculous properties of the earth in the ex-king's cave; they tied it in bags round their necks. Alvarez cautiously remarks: "They say that some have received health."

The Portuguese were comfortable enough in their quarters at Axum, and but for their anxiety to receive news of the fleet which was to take them home they were doubtless fairly happy, especially as it was not too far from the coast. Alvarez especially must have been in his element in this old repository of legend and tradition, and

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so he cannot have been best pleased at becoming involved in the quarrels of the Abyssinian Ambassador who had been deputed to accompany them back to Portugal.

This person, Zaga-Za-Ab, of whom we shall hear more later, had been presented with some lands, no doubt as a reward for his prospective services as ambassador, and, during his absence with the Portuguese on their journey to the coast, a rival of his at court, the king's chief chamberlain, by some means dispossessed him of his newly acquired territory. Zaga-Za-Ab invoked the aid of his Portuguese friends, and as the period of the monsoon was not favourable for the arrival of the fleet, he persuaded some of them, including Alvarez, to accompany him on the long and tedious journey back to the king's headquarters, to assist him in pressing his suit.

They arrived about the end of 1524, and their visit enables us to obtain a delightful picture of Abyssinian judicial methods at that time, which, it may be observed incidentally, have not changed a great deal since then.

A "commission" of three so-called judges was appointed to deal with the matter, and after some time they solemnly recorded their judgment to the effect that as Zaga-Za-Ab's gifted lands were within the territories ruled over by the chief chamberlain, the latter had the right to take them if he wished!

Against this astonishing judgment the unfortunate Ambassador appealed, and after a further delay the "Lord Chief Justice" was instructed

to look into the case. But his efforts were abruptly terminated just as he was about to obtain the king's consent to reverse the former judgment. One morning Alvarez met him being led to the "place of punishment" by a party of the king's executioners. Here he was stretched out, tied between stakes planted in the ground, and soundly flogged. The process must have been intended to frighten as well as to chastise, for we are told that "there were two executioners on each side of him, and most times they strike the ground with the scourge. And when orders come from the king to strike, the blow reaches the bones, and of these blows they gave him three."

We are not told why he was thus flogged, but apparently it was in the nature of a mark of the king's interest in him, for Alvarez says: "Reckoning this time I have seen the Chief Justice flogged three times and after that two days later return to his office because they do not hold it to be a dishonour; rather they say the king is fond of him, because he remembers him, and a short time after does him favours and bestows lordships."

One might well be forgiven for preferring oblivion to such striking marks of interest and affection.

Whether on account of the king's "fondness" for the Chief Justice or for some other reason, he decided to accept his advice and to reverse the decision of the judges who had decided against Zaga-Za-Ab. Not only did he do this, but he added further lands to the grant, so that

the Ambassador went off well satisfied, with some of his Portuguese friends, back to his estates which lay on the road to Barua, where the bulk of the Portuguese under da Lima were encamped, still awaiting the long-deferred arrival of the fleet.

The Portuguese were there re-united in mid-Lent 1525; Easter passed, "nobody came and we remained sad as before." In July the King, hearing that they had not yet left, and that they were short of supplies, sent messages ordering them to go and stay at Abrigima, and there they went very unwillingly for it was a long month's journey inland. Here they were to be given five hundred loads of wheat, and a hundred cows and a hundred sheep, and honey for wine, and having collected their stores they returned again near to the sea in January, 1526 to maintain their vigil without telling Zaga-Za-Ab who remained on his estates.

On April 1st they received the most alarming news. Two messengers whom they had sent to the coast returned, and reported that three ships manned by Moors had arrived, and had told them that a Portuguese vessel had been captured by the Moslems, that India was lost and that no Portuguese were left there.

This crushing blow almost reduced them to despair. Alvarez himself made up his mind that he was destined to remain there forever. "I have got some good slaves," he quaintly remarks, "and fourteen cows, and I have got rams which I will exchange for ewes. . . . I

will pitch my tent in which to take refuge with my servants, and I will arrange a hermitage within, and each day I will say Mass, and commend myself to God, since the Lord is pleased that I should be here."

This philosophic attitude commended itself to all the Portuguese, excepting only da Lima, whose spirit was not of the kind that would resign itself easily to such a secluded and pastoral form of existence.

And then just when they had resigned themselves to the fate from which there appeared to be no escape, a man, a native of the country, "came running so fast that he could not speak from fatigue. 'Sir, sir,' he stammered, 'the Portuguese are on the sea.'"

The effect of this amazing announcement coming immediately after the disheartening news from which they had hardly recovered, may well be imagined. "We went out of our senses, so great was the joy." The news was confirmed by the receipt of a letter from Dom Hector da Silveira, the commander of the fleet, announcing that he had come for them and was at Massawa.

Da Lima was all for an immediate start, but Alvarez pointed out that they would create a most unfavourable impression if they travelled on so great a feast-day as Easter, and so, greatly to their credit, they restrained their natural impatience and delayed their departure until April 9th, a few days after which they rejoined da Silveira at Arkiko.

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Here they awaited amidst feasting and rejoicing the arrival of Zaga-Za-Ab, for whom they had sent post-haste, and the favourable turn of the monsoon which would enable them to make India; and during these few days there arrived four messengers from Prester John who had heard of the arrival of the fleet.

The emperor's men had travelled night and day, obtaining fresh animals at every town, and they brought an urgent message from their sovereign suggesting that the whole party should return to court to receive gold and presents to take to the King of Portugal, his brother.

But it is unlikely that all the gold in the world would have tempted these sorely tried men to extend their six years' exile when the fleet to take them home was riding at anchor before their eyes. They replied that by no means would they turn back, but that Zaga-Za-Ab could go if he liked, to which this worthy answered that if he went back without them he would be thrown to the lions.

So, for once in a wonderful spirit of unanimity, the party embarked on their long-awaited vessels, and on April 28th, 1526, the fleet set sail, three royal galleons and two carvels.

They spent three days en route at the ill-omened island of Camaran because "the wind wearied us," and while waiting there Alvarez bethought him of endeavouring to retrieve the remains of Dom Duarte de Galvan, the unfortunate Ambassador who had died on the way out in 1517.

Alvarez had marked the spot of the grave at the time, and now went off with a slave to look for it. Whether they mistook the place or whether someone had forestalled them it is not possible to say, but anyhow, Alvarez relates that: "I ordered him to be dug up and to dispose all his bones in order, but we did not find more than three teeth."

These he put in a small box and took on board secretly, lest the sailors should be nervous about "carrying dead bodies"—though one would hardly imagine that three teeth would come within that category.

Off Aden they ran into a heavy gale, and the galleon *St. Leon*, in which Alvarez sailed, lost sight of the rest of the fleet; they did not pick them up again until ten days after reaching Muscat (June 7th). The flag ship arrived the next day, her crew in a piteous condition indeed. For they had run out of water, and were almost in extremis, not having eaten or drunk for three days. Indeed, it is probable they would never have made port at all had it not been for the admiral, Dom Hector da Silveira, who had set a magnificent example to his men. "He was the first to leave off drinking, and with tears in his eyes and a little water in his hand, he went about distributing it among the sick . . . he did not any more sleep in nor enter his cabin, that it might not be supposed that he went to fill himself with water and left the crews to suffer."

They were fine tough men, some of these old Portuguese sailor-soldiers, and it is not surprising

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that there was never any lack of volunteers to follow them to the ends of the earth on their astonishingly hazardous voyages on their ill-found cockle-shells of boats.

From Muscat they went on to Ormuz, and here they met the Viceroy of India, Dom Lopo Vaz de Sampayo, who with all his officers of the fortress and of the fleet came down to the beach to receive them as men risen from the dead, and gave them a great welcome.

To him they gave the letter and presents from the Abyssinian king—they were, of course, addressed to Dom Lopez de Sequeira, who had been Viceroy when they came out in 1520—and these must have caused him some embarrassment.

The presents included "a silk robe with five gold plates before and other five behind, and one on each shoulder, which in all made twelve; each one was the size of the palm of the hand."

The letter was a long rambling effusion in the ordinary Abyssinian style sent from "David the head of his Kingdoms, loved of God, prop of the faith, a relation of the lineage of Judah, son of David, son of Solomon, son of the Column of Sion, son of the Seed of Jacob, son of the hand of Mary, son of Nahum in the flesh."

He seems, if we may judge from this letter, to have rather regretted the non-conclusion of some sort of treaty or alliance, and to have shown a desire for co-operation at least with the Portuguese. He tells the Viceroy: "I give you permission to make a church and a castle in Massawa and in Delagua, and to put priests in the churches

and strong men to guard the castles from fear of the Moors, dirty sons of Mahomed. Do this quickly before you go to India and do not give yourselves leisure in this. . . . When you wish to make war upon the Moors, send and tell me, and what you want and have need of; and I will send you horsemen and archers, and I will be with you and we will defeat the Moors and Pagans, justly for the faith, I and you."

He does not forget to put in a good word for da Lima and Alvarez, though he has a dig at the former. " The Ambassadors of your entourage are great and good, and they love one another well in spite of their faults, and do to them much good for the sake of their goodness especially to Dom Rodrigo da Lima who is very good excepting his faults. . . . To Padre Francisco give twice as many thanks because he is a holy man, honest, and of good conscience for the love of God. I know his disposition, and I gave him a cross and a staff of his lordship into his hand: this is a sign of his lordship and he is an abbot in our country: and do you increase him and make him Lord of Massawa and Zeila, and all the isles of the Red Sea and of the extremities of our countries."

The emperor did not forget to ask for instructors to be sent, " masters of working gold and silver, of making swords and weapons of iron and helmets and masons to make houses . . . and to make lead to cover churches and to make earthen tiles in our country so that we may not cover our houses with thatch: of this we have

great necessity, and are very sad at not possessing them."

It is to be feared that da Lima's reports did not inspire the Viceroy with any burning desire to fulfil the emperor's requests; in any case no effort was made to comply with them, and after wintering at Ormuz they sailed for Cananor. They met Dom Duarte de Galvan's son at Cochim, who seemed very pleased at receiving his father's teeth, and then, on January 4th, 1527 the mission sailed for home on three ships that left Cananor at some days' interval.

So delighted were they to get away, and so eager to reach home, that "each ship made its course full speed as God might assist them without first talking of waiting for one another."

On July 24th they made Lisbon, but as plague was raging there they were not allowed to enter the city, but were conveyed in small boats to Santarem. Here they met a "heat wave," and so great was the heat that they all suffered intensely, and one of the Arabs they had brought back with them died of it. Surely a remarkable home-coming to Europe from some of the hottest parts of the world.

They pushed on to Coimbra, where they were kept in quarantine for a month, and then they were received in great state by King John III, "who was very gay and showed that he rejoiced much with the embassy."

To him they presented the letters written by the Emperor of Abyssinia, both those for King Emanuel, who had died in 1521 while the mission

was in Abyssinia, and those for King John; also a crown of gold and silver brought by Zaga-Za-Ab "with the sides two palms high and not very rich."

The letters, which were very long and involved, were largely a repetition of that addressed to the Viceroy, of which extracts have been given above; but it is particularly important to note that not only were the emperor's desires for material assistance more strongly reaffirmed, but that a sentence was added which encouraged the Portuguese to hope for the conversion of Abyssinia to Roman Catholicism. The emperor says: "I send Padre Francisco Alvarez to the Pope with my obedience which is a direct matter for me." This had important consequences later.

The king does not, however, appear to have been very much inclined to take action on his Abyssinian cousin's letter, for though he rewarded richly da Lima's mission, conferred a benefice in the Archbishopric of Braga on Alvarez, and provided generously for Zaga-Za-Ab, nothing was done until the return of Bermudez from Abyssinia ten years later in 1537.

And so ended the first mission to the Court of Abyssinia from a European nation; though it failed in its main object, which was to negotiate some form of treaty of mutual support against the rising tide of Islam, it bore results later, and fourteen years afterwards assistance was to come to Abyssinia from Portugal at the eleventh hour, assistance which the Abyssinian emperor's successes just before da Lima's arrival

had induced him to spurn so foolishly when proffered by that envoy.

But much was to happen in the meanwhile, and many terrible misfortunes were to befall the unhappy country.

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CHAPTER IX

GENERAL CONDITIONS IN ABYSSINIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XVI CENTURY

It may be well at this stage to glance at the condition of the kingdom of Abyssinia as it was at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In area and extent it differed considerably from the modern conception of the country. It extended as far north as Suakin, and as far south as Cape Guardafui, though various Moslem states had established themselves here and there along the coast-line, notably in Adel, and at Zeila in what is now British Somaliland. The coastal governorship of the Bahrnagast extended northwards beyond the present-day limits of the country into what is now the Italian colony of Eritrea; westwards the boundary was sketchy and ill-defined, but in all probability the authority of the Prester did not stretch as far in this direction as it does to-day. The main bulk of the empire consisted of the historic countries of Tigre and Amhara, Gojam and Shoa; Enarea was the most southerly country in the centre to acknowledge the Emperor; the great Galla districts to the south, which were later conquered by the emperor

Menelik, did not then come within the limits of the empire, nor had they been as yet overrun by the Galla hordes who were to descend like a plague of locusts on the country from about 1542 onwards.

The authority of the emperor within his own dominions was of the most absolute character, and he appears to have enjoyed despotic power and to have utilised it without let or hindrance. The great nobles and governors do not seem to have had any authority outside their own provinces; they were appointed and removed at will on the flimsiest pretexts or for no reasons at all.

No "lord of lands" could leave his province to come to the king's court without permission; nor, once being there, could he leave without authority. On arrival at court the splendidly apparelled Governor would doff his finery and approach the king stripped to the waist; and so he would remain for weeks perhaps until the king chose to summon him to his presence. A summons to court was a dreaded event, for it might mean the loss of all his lands, wealth and possessions, even of his wife and family, at the whim of the king. And then would follow several years' wandering about the court, poor and neglected by all, as is the fate of those upon whom fortune has ceased to smile. "And this," says Alvarez, "we used to see every day."

The Governors of Gojam, Tigre and of another great principality were all arrested while the Portuguese were with the king, and we are told

that two at least of these functionaries were done to death; at any rate they all disappeared and were no more heard of. One of them was supposed by the Prester "to have had to do with his mother," and to have had a son by her; no action was taken during the lady's lifetime, "that she might not be more defamed than was already the case."

The wealth of the king was considerable, and each year every Governor had to send in the appointed tribute to swell the royal treasury; what this amounted to may be gathered from the account we have of one province's contribution—that of Gojam. Three thousand mules, three thousand horses, three thousand bales of "basuto" (a valuable fleecy cloth), thirty thousand cotton cloths of smaller value, and thirty thousand "onquias" of gold, passed before the king; the procession took ten days to defile.

Stuffs of silk and of cashmere from India, and velvets from Arabia, were contributed by other districts; and all this wealth was stored away in caves and on "ambas" (mountain tops) and in churches and monasteries. One such cave near the house of Pedro da Covilham contained, according to his account, "enough gold to buy the world," and every year large sums were added to it.

The State functions, religious and other, took place amid some magnificence; at Easter, for example, the great enclosure around the king's dwelling was lighted up by "6,000 candles in very good array," held on canes by attendants,

whilst behind them were five thousand more persons taking part in the ceremony, whilst on each side of the emperor were two horsemen, whose mounts "were so caparisoned and adorned and covered with brocade, that it seemed that they were sewn up in gold."

Of the wealth stored in the churches we have ample evidence not only from the Portuguese, but from the accounts of the Arab chronicler who records the Moslem invasion, which is described later. Of the Queen-mother's church in Gojam Covilham says that the altar was of wood covered all over with gold, and the altar-stone itself of solid gold, large and of great weight and price.

The country itself was rich in natural resources; in the province of Fatagar, for example, situated between Shoa and Adel, we read that there was much tillage of wheat and barley, much cultivated ground and fields, and great breeding of cattle, sheep, goats, horses and mules. From near a lake in that district there came to the court an infinite quantity of fish, and oranges, lemons, citrons and figs.

From these and other references, it is obvious that the richness and fertility of the soil and the variety of climatic conditions which are such a feature of Abyssinia to-day were at that time developed and utilised to an extent greater than is the case at present, and that a large proportion at all events of the population of this land so favoured by nature must have lived in a condition of considerable comfort, in spite of autocratic misgovernment and barbaric customs.

Many of the districts passed through by Alvarez are described by him as being abundantly populated, and densely cultivated; he says: "it seems to me that in the world there is not so populous a country, and so abundant in crops, and breeding of infinite herds, game of all kinds."

There is not a district in Abyssinia to which that description could be applied to-day; foreign invasion, followed by centuries of civil war, misgovernment and oppression, have reduced it to a sparsely cultivated land in which the people grow no more than is sufficient for their bare maintenance.

Whether in those days anyone except the priests and a very few of the *élite* could read or write is open to doubt; if they could they were more advanced then than they are now. But King Lebna Dengel himself was undoubtedly a "patron of letters," for a number of interesting documents date from the early and more peaceful portion of his reign.

It was he who caused to be written (in Gîz) the chronicles of the preceding sovereigns Zara-Jacob, Baeda Maryam, Eskender and probably Naod; as well as a comprehensive chronicle from the time of the Queen of Sheba's son Menelik up to his own reign; and he also caused to be translated from Arabic into Gîz quite a number of religious and theological works.

But, as has already been pointed out, the number of readers of these works must have been very strictly limited.

The army was recruited on a feudal basis,

that is to say, every "lord of lands" great and small was expected to bring in a body of men when summoned by the king to war. In an incredibly short space of time a body of 100,000 men could be collected in this way; there was no trouble about commissariat, for every man was expected to bring with him his own supply of flour; meat was "collected" on the march, and no pay was given.

The king himself took with him on the march immense supplies of foodstuffs and mead, and large numbers of baskets of "treasure"—rich stuffs and materials as well as gold. Where his white tent was pitched there was camp formed, and thousands of little hut-like shelters of branches would be erected all around in an incredibly short space of time for the immense numbers who followed in his train—soldiers, camp-followers, women and slaves. And as the requirements of such a host must have been very great, it may well be imagined that the peasantry through whose lands lay the line of march must have been relieved when the king's hosts had passed on their way. For all had to contribute to its wants.

The Abuna, the head of the Church, appears to have possessed little power, or even influence, with the king at this period. Indeed, for the twenty-three years 1468 to 1491 there had been no Abuna appointed, as the then kings refused to send for one to Alexandria, whence they had always been appointed since the XIIIth century. The practice of importing a Copt as Abuna is stated to have been introduced by the great

Abyssinian ecclesiastic Tekla Haymanot as part of the arrangements made on the restoration of the Solomonean dynasty. The reason for this was twofold, partly in order to maintain a link with the outside world, and partly in order to avoid the disorders that would undoubtedly have been caused by the election to the headship of the church of a native of the country—the intrigue and rivalry would have been immense. It may also be surmised that Tekla Haymanot was shrewd enough to see that a foreign Abuna would be far more likely to be able to maintain an independent position than a native, who most probably would have been a creature of the king.

The interregnum in the series of Abunas referred to above was terminated in 1491 owing to the murmurs of the people. For as the Abuna alone could ordain priests and deacons, the service of the church was becoming disorganised by the long interval of non-recruitment; and moreover the idle and pleasant career of an ecclesiastic had ceased to be open to the people.

So Alexandria was applied to, and sent two Abunas, one being held in reserve, while the other, a very old man, was still in office when the Portuguese arrived. He lived indeed until 1535.

He seemed to have been venerated by the people who regarded him, *inter alia*, as the only person who could properly settle the various points of dogma on which they were ever disputing.

The love of theological discussion and argument was as strong among the Abyssinians of that period as it is to-day, and they used

to invite the Portuguese to their religious celebrations; afterward the Prester himself, or the Abuna, or some of the priests, would ask them their views and compare the Abyssinian with the Romish practice, and quote passages from the Scriptures at each other in support of their arguments.

An amusing example of this was the great feast of Temkat, as it is now called, when the waters of a stream are blessed and the whole population of the locality re-baptised on the anniversary of the baptism of Christ. On the occasion described by Alvarez a great tank nearly five feet deep was constructed, lined with boards covered with waxed cloth; this was filled with water led in through a large pipe, the water passing through a cloth to be filtered as it entered the tank. Priests chanted over the tank until midnight when the ceremony of baptism commenced; first of all the Prester, the Abuna and the empress were immersed, and they alone were allowed to retain their clothes. All the others, men and women, were obliged to enter the tank "naked as when their mothers bore them," and there their heads were pushed under the water three times by an old priest who apparently remained in the water during the whole ceremony. As it lasted for many hours, and as we are told that there was a sharp frost at the time, it is hardly surprising that the priest was "half dead with the cold;" indeed it cannot have been an inspiring performance for any of those taking part in it.

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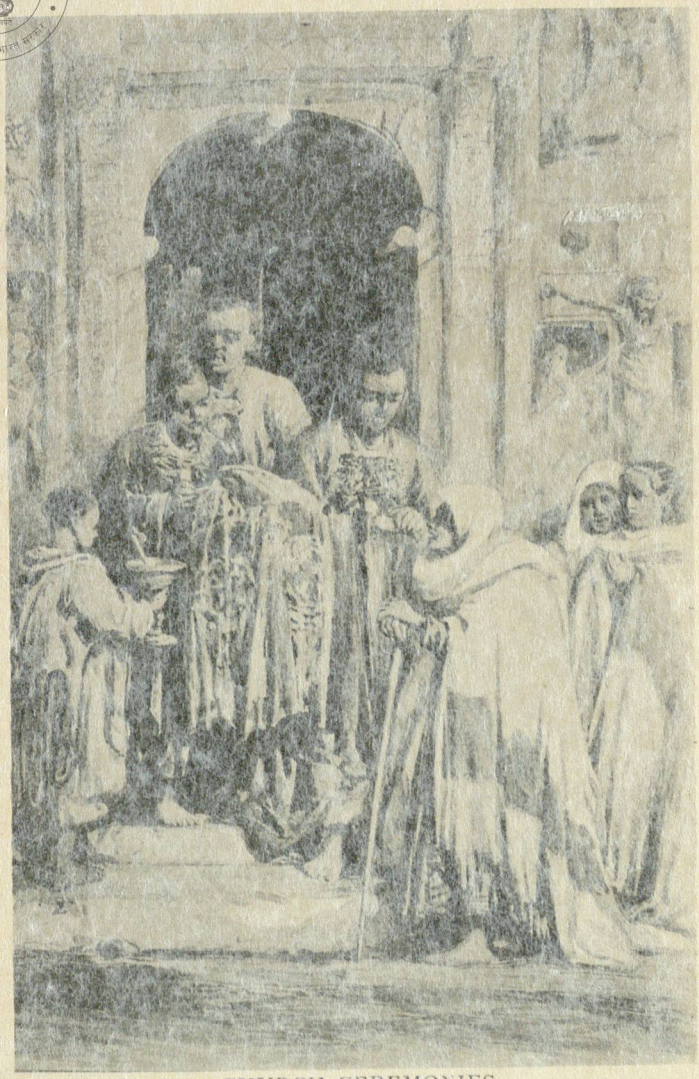

CHURCH CEREMONIES

" The priests go to the door of all the churches and monasteries to read the epistles and gospels . . and there they give the communion to the people."

(Alvarez)

The Prester watched the thousands of baptisms through a slit in some curtains in front of his seat; all entered the water by some steps "naked with their backs to the Prester, and when they came out again they showed him their fronts, the women as well as the men."

Alvarez sturdily refused the emperor's invitation to be re-baptised, pointing out that in their books it was written that they should not be baptised more than once; and when asked how he would deal with weak-kneed brethren "who had turned Moors or Jews," pleasantly suggested that if they truly repented they should be given a salutary penance, and if not they "might take them and burn them, "for such is the use in Frankland and the Church of Rome!"

Still less did the Portuguese approve of the ordination by the Abuna of priests and deacons. Thousands of persons were admitted to these degrees at a sitting; the candidates for priesthood, including in their ranks some who were blind others who were paralysed in the arms or the legs, others who came "almost naked and showing their nakedness," whilst amongst those made deacons were a number of children too small to speak or walk, who were carried in men's arms, and could only be made to swallow the sacrament by having water poured down their throats!

More drastic than the feasts of the Church were the fasts and penances observed by many of its members. The long periods of abstinence from flesh, eggs, milk and butter which obtain to-day were apparently even more rigorously

followed at that period, and we are told of friars eating nothing but "herbs and sprouted lentils" during the whole of lent.

Some of them slept in water up to their necks every Wednesday and Friday during this period; others stood upright in a "tabernacle . . . made like a box without a covering, much plastered with clay and dung;" while yet others wore hair shirts within which was an iron girdle four fingers broad . . . lined on both edges on the side towards the skin with points the size of those of a saw."

They would not even meet their enemies in battle during Lent because of the "debility and weakness of their bodies, for the fast must on no account be broken."

It is a strange picture that is thus drawn for us of this ancient people. Possessed of a species of autocthonous civilisation, an ultra-autocratic ruler, a nobility dependent on the least whim of the monarch, uncultured, barbarous, ignorant, fanatical, deeply imbued with the outward forms and ceremonies of religion but untouched by its spirit, an enormous and utterly useless priesthood possessed of much wealth as a body but little power, and a vast mass of oppressed peasantry.

Yet the whole nation clung to their faith and independence through many years of devastating war, and all from the royal house downwards suffered death, misery and impoverishment rather than yield their soil to the foreign invader, or adopt the new faiths presented to them so forcibly by the followers of Mahomet and of Loyola.

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CHAPTER X

MOSLEM INVASION OF ABYSSINIA BETWEEN THE DEPARTURE OF RODERIGO DA LIMA'S MISSION IN 1526 AND THE ARRIVAL OF CHRISTOVÃO DA GAMA IN 1541

No sooner had the Portuguese mission left the shores of Abyssinia than the prosperous and comparatively peaceful position of the country, which had so strongly influenced King Lebna Dengel in adopting the unfortunate course of letting them go without achieving any definite result, began to be threatened.

The Turks and the Moslem nations bordering on Ethiopia had been alarmed by the possibilities of the alliance between the Portuguese and the Abyssinians to which da Lima's mission had seemed to point, and had determined on combined action to conquer Abyssinia, and to close to Europeans the entrance to the Red Sea in order to facilitate their attack on India.

Egypt and the Yemen had already been conquered ; now the Christian pilgrim caravans to Jerusalem too were massacred, Zeila was occupied, arms were distributed to the Adals, the age-long foes of Abyssina, and to the Emir of Harar.

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They found a ready ally in the person of a most remarkable Somali, Ahmed Grañ by name. Born about 1506, he had been an ordinary soldier in the troop of the Emir of Harar, and by his gifts of leadership and fanatical zeal for the Moslem faith, had rapidly carved out a leading position for himself at the early age of twenty, by which time he had already become the recognised leader of the more daring warriors of Harar.

He had carried out a series of successful raids and forays into Abyssinia on an ever-increasing scale, until in 1527, when only twenty-one years old, he won a really substantial victory at Eddir over the emperor's brother-in-law, Degalhan, who was returning from a successful expedition into Adal.

Grañ was so named (Grañ means "left") from his habit of using his sword with his left hand. He was no mere marauder; he was a skilful general and a born leader of men; his religious fanaticism led him to endeavour to subjugate Abyssinia, and though cruel and severe he was eminently just, displaying many generous sentiments and being personally entirely disdainful of money. The vast amount of gold and other rich booty obtained from pillaging the churches and monasteries of Abyssinia he divided fairly amongst his followers, not forgetting those whose duties prevented their taking part in the actual pillaging; a share was always laid aside for the "public treasury," and when Grañ thought all had had enough he burned the rest. He himself taught the Koran to the children of his followers.

His wife, Batya del Wambara, who plays an important part in the story of Abyssinia and who is described later on, was the daughter of the celebrated Arab chief, Mahfuz, who after twenty-five years of successful raiding into Abyssinia, during which time he drove off whole villages of men, women and children to be sold as slaves in Arabia and India, was defeated and killed by Lebna Dengel in 1517.

Roused by Grañ's success, Lebna Dengel determined to crush his new enemy, and to repeat his victory of ten years previously; he collected a large army and marched westwards to the attack. But the fates were now against him, and the good fortune which had smiled on the first nineteen years of his reign had left him to return no more.

Firearms had been introduced into Arabia in 1515, Moslem merchants had brought them over to Zeila, and Grañ was able to obtain some of these for his Somals, besides reinforcements of Turkish matchlockmen from Zebid and Arab mercenaries. Guns had not then reached Abyssinia (two were first brought in by Arabs in 1530), and consequently the relative fighting strength of the Moslems was much greater than that of their Abyssinian adversaries, a disproportion which was further increased by Grañ's real skill as a general.

Lebna Dengel gained a preliminary victory at Samarna, but on March 7th, 1529, the Abyssinians suffered a crushing and overwhelming defeat at Chambra Kouré, when thousands of their best

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men were slain, and an enormous amount of booty fell into the hands of Grañ.

The effects of this battle were decisive; for over a decade the Moslems pillaged and ravaged the unhappy kingdom from end to end, defeating the king and his forces whenever they met them, until the wretched monarch, hunted like a wild beast from one refuge to another, had hardly a mountain top in his country where he could call himself safe. One son was captured in 1539; another was killed in battle in the same year; his wife and remaining children were shut up in the impregnable Amba or mountain fortress of Debra Damo; and the crowning blow fell in 1539, when the royal Amba of Geshen, on which were incarcerated all the royal princes except his immediate family, and the vast accumulated treasures of generations of kings, was captured by treachery, the entire population massacred, and the incalculable wealth stored therein during centuries was carried off.

Beginning in the south, province after province fell before Grañ; Shoa, Fatagar, Angot, Begemdir, Lasta, Amhara, Tigré, were all in turn overrun by the Moslems. Time and again the king himself was almost captured; his adventures and hair-breadth escapes as recounted in the Abyssinian and even in the Arab chronicles read like a romance.

On one occasion he was being chased round Lake Tana; he and his followers were crossing a narrow defile leading to the passage of the Abai just below where it issues from the lake, when

Grañ himself, leading the pursuit, came up with them and got right in among the king's men. Grañ was pressed so tightly amongst them that he could not use his drawn sword, and thus just missed killing or capturing the king, who almost alone escaped by the fleetness of his horse.

The desolation wrought by this period of pillage is almost impossible to describe. Crops could not be cultivated, whole peoples starved; it was unsafe even to light a fire, lest a marauding party should be attracted thereby, and on this account it is alleged the Abyssinians then began the practice, which obtains to-day, of eating their meat raw. Their wonderful monasteries and churches were sacked and burned, irreplaceable old manuscripts, as well as vast stores of wealth accumulated in the sacred buildings, were destroyed or stolen. Even the ancient monastery of Debra Libanos in the south, the seat of learning, and the wonderful old church of Axum in the north, the crowning place of the monarchs for centuries, shared the common fate, and the loss to the country and indeed to the world may be measured by the descriptions given by the Moslem chronicler who accompanied Grañ of the wealth that was scattered abroad.

Detailed accounts are given of the sacking and burning of over fifty of the principal churches and monasteries, some of them centuries old, all of them enriched with the accumulated wealth of years which had been placed there for safe-keeping. The pillage of the church of

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Makana Selassie may be quoted as a typical example. Regarding this act of vandalism the chronicler says: "He himself (i.e. Ahmed Grañ) arrived at Makana Selassie, and penetrated into it with admiration. He entered with his companions, and in contemplating it they almost lost the power of vision. It was ornamented with sheets of gold and silver on which had been placed incrustations of pearls: the leaf of a wooden doorway was ten cubits long and four wide: it was covered with sheets of gold and silver, and over the gold had been placed incrustations in various colours. The church was 100 cubits long; its width as much as its height over 150 cubits; the ceiling and the interior courts were covered with sheets of gold and ornamented with golden statues. The Moslems were amazed at this work . . . they crowded in and he [*i.e.* Grañ] said to them: 'What any man takes shall be for himself excepting the sheets.' They set to work with a thousand axes tearing down the gold and the incrustations which were in the church, from mid-afternoon until night; each man took as much gold as he wanted and was rich forever; more than a third of the gold was burned with the church."

The church of Atronsa Maryam was pillaged from midday until the following morning. The Moslems tore out rich brocaded velvets and silks, gold and silver in heaps, gold cups, dishes and censers, a "tabot" (ark of the covenant) of gold on four feet, weighing more than a thousand ounces, an illuminated Bible bound in sheets of

gold, and countless other riches, until they were tired of carrying their loot and loading it up. Much still remained, so they set fire to the church and the store-houses and burned everything. So stricken with grief were some monks at the destruction of their church and its accumulated treasures that they threw themselves into the flames and perished there, an event quoted by the Moslem chronicler with grim satisfaction, and the pleasant addendum, "May God fight them."

Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely.

The fiendish delight in destruction, as well as the thirst for loot, is evident from the foregoing extracts. And the fanaticism of the invading hordes is no less apparent from the writer's description of the battles.

The Christian Abyssinians are always described as "infidels" or "polytheists;" when one of them is killed in battle "God hurled his soul into hell," and the kindly epithet, "May God's curse be on him," is generally appended to any reference to a prominent leader. Thousands of Abyssinians are always killed in every battle, though the Moslem losses are either nil or almost negligible; when a Moslem of note does happen to be slain "God hastened his soul to Paradise—what a happy ending," is the description.

The effects of all these years of ruthless massacre and pillage can hardly be over-rated—indeed it is probable that they have lasted until to-day, for the country was permanently impoverished, the population decimated, and its whole development and progress thrown back for centuries.

But in spite of all these crushing and overwhelming disasters the Abyssinian king refused to yield or to make terms with Grañ, and maintained a sort of guerilla warfare among the mountains. By 1538, when he was almost at the zenith of his misfortunes, Grañ, according to the old Ethiopian chronicler, sent messengers to Lebna Dengel saying: "Give me your daughter to wife, and let us make peace; if you do not as I bid you, there is nowhere where you may lay your head."

But the sturdy king, battered as he was by fortune, would listen to no overtures, and his uncompromising answer was full of dignity: "I will not give her to you, for you are an infidel: it is better to fall into the Lord's hands than into yours, for his power is as great as his pity. It is he who makes the weak strong and the strong weak."

He still hoped for help from Portugal, whither he had despatched Bermudez in 1535, and in 1540 he heard the news that an expedition was on its way. But he was not destined to see it, for worn out by the ten years of hardship, disaster and tribulation, national and personal, he died a fugitive among his mountains in September 1540, a few months before the arrival of his allies.

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CHAPTER XI

DESPATCH OF CHRISTOVÃO DA GAMA'S EXPEDITION

In order to understand how it was that the Portuguese came back again to Abyssinia, it is necessary to retrace our steps for a few years.

It will be recollected that when da Lima's mission quitted Abyssinia in 1526 they took with them an Abyssinian envoy Zaga-Za-Ab; and although strangely enough Alvarez does not mention this, they left behind them at the Prester's court two of their party, Bermudez the barber surgeon, and Andrade the painter.

Zaga-Za-Ab reached Lisbon in 1527, but he seems to have achieved nothing at all in Portugal, and to have shewn himself to be an altogether impossible person, as might have been imagined from the incidents recorded about him in the earlier chapters.

Bermudez, on the other hand, succeeded in ingratiating himself with Lebna Dengel to a very considerable extent; he was given lands and offices, and he claims indeed in his book which he published in Lisbon in 1565 that the king induced the head of the Abyssinian Church (the Abuna Mark) on his death-bed to nominate Bermudez as his successor.

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Bermudez states that this nomination by the Abuna of his own successor was in accordance with the usual practice, a statement which is manifestly untrue, inasmuch as since the XIII century up to the present day the Abuna has always been nominated by the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria. Moreover, the Abuna has no power to nominate his successor; he is not even authorised to appoint bishops, much less an archbishop or patriarch.

It is indeed probable that the whole story is equally untrue, and there is much evidence against it.

The only reason, however, which might be adduced in support is that the king was at that time in the most desperate straits; his kingdom had been overrun and his armies defeated consistently ever since the departure of the Portuguese, and he must have been prepared to pay any price to secure help from other Christian powers. And what was more likely to induce these powers, headed by the Pope, to come to his aid against the Moslems than the nomination of a Catholic to the headship of the Abyssinian Church, and the consequent indication that that church was a ready subject for inclusion in the Catholic fold?

Be that as it may, Bermudez was despatched to Europe in 1535, and after an adventurous journey, during which he was captured by the Turks, who cut off part of his tongue, he arrived with a number of promises of kinds, to secure aid at almost any price for the sorely-stricken

country. He proceeded first of all to Rome, where he claimed that Pope Paul III confirmed him in his position of Patriarch of Abyssinia, another statement for which there is no supporting evidence. He continued to Lisbon, where he must have arrived about 1537; he was well received by the king, who promised to consider the Abyssinian emperor's request; by way of demonstrating his authority, Bermudez promptly proceeded to throw the Abyssinian envoy Zaga-Za-Ab into chains, acting as he said on the orders of the emperor, "two chains on each arm according to the custom of his country."

The king would not, however, tolerate this high-handed procedure and ordered the man to be released, and shortly afterwards decided to accede to Lebna Dengel's request and to direct the Viceroy of India to despatch a relief expedition. Bermudez was to accompany it, and he was preparing to start back to India in the fleet commanded by the newly appointed Viceroy Dom Garcia da Noronha which left Lisbon in April 1538. He, however, fell dangerously ill at this time, and was unable to sail; incidentally, he accused the Abyssinian envoy Zaga-Za-Ab of having poisoned him, in revenge for having been thrown into chains—which is quite possible.

He did not in fact sail until a year later (March 1539), and it is not at all clear what orders to the Viceroy he took with him. The King of Portugal certainly directed that a force should be sent to assist the Abyssinian monarch; but whether this force was to be under Bermudez's

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orders as he claimed, or not, or what its composition was to be, is uncertain. It is improbable, in view of the later correspondence that passed between the king and the emperor, that Bermudez was to do more than recruit a few artificers or artisans to accompany the troops.

Be that as it may, when Bermudez arrived in Goa towards the end of 1539, Dom Garcia da Noronna had just returned ill from Diu, and nothing was done in the way of preparing an expedition into Abyssinia. Indeed, he seems to have had some doubt as to Bermudez's *bona fides*, for he sent in February 1540 a small vessel commanded by Fernao Farto with orders to land an Abyssinian messenger at Massawa bearing a letter for Lebna Dengel, asking whether Bermudez "were a true embassy or not."

The reply arrived back in Goa in May; in his letter (which is still extant) the king confirmed Bermudez's mission, saying that his lands would be largely increased as the reward for his services, and begged that the troops might be sent with the utmost despatch.

Meanwhile Dom Garcia da Noronha had died (April 3rd) and had been succeeded as Viceroy by Dom Estevao da Gama, second son of the great navigator.

According to Bermudez, da Gama was not at first anxious to despatch the expedition owing to the cost involved, but eventually he got together a strong fleet, which sailed under his personal command and reached Massawa on February 10th, 1541. It is curious that, although the Viceroy

heard on arrival there of the death of King Lebna Dengel in September 1540, and received the most pathetic appeals for help, he did nothing towards landing any troops, but himself pushed on to Suez with his lighter vessels, leaving the rest of the fleet at Massawa under the command of a relative, Dom Manuel da Gama.

This was an unfortunate step, for Manuel appears to have been a person of harsh and violent temper, and without the power of leading and controlling men possessed in such marked degree by the other members of the great family, a power which now became essential in order to cope with the internal dissensions, so characteristic of Portuguese expeditions, which broke out on the ships at Massawa.

According to the Viceroy's orders, Manuel had despatched a messenger to Lebna Dengel, telling him of the arrival of the fleet, and asking for someone to come and meet Bermudez; meanwhile they were to await orders.

But this by no means contented Bermudez, and though Castanhoso does not deal with the episode, Correa (who was in Cochin at the time) gives a very full account of the mutiny caused by this turbulent barber-bleeder-surgeon-priest.

The crews of the small vessels were suffering from bad and scanty rations, excessive heat and cramped quarters, and were naturally enough anxious to get ashore. Bermudez, who in addition to being an inaccurate and even untruthful writer, seems to have been an intriguer and a disloyal subordinate, took advantage of the

prevailing discontent. For reasons of his own he wished to get an expeditionary force landed before the Viceroy's return, and he worked on the men to such a point, painting such glowing pictures of Abyssinia, that in spite of Manuel's orders and precautions a large party began to organise a landing expedition of their own. Manuel caught five who were actually starting and hanged them out of hand; he patrolled the bay with row-boats lest any of the men should try to get away; but in vain. A party of 100 under Antonio de Sousa managed to elude the guard and "shipping silently on a foist rowed out through the fleet . . . Manuel da Gama came with his boats and followed them, firing with bases and matchlocks, but as none fired with a will all the shots missed," and so the party got safely to shore.

The result was a foregone conclusion. The Moslems arranged for a spy to offer to guide the party, and they, knowing nothing of the people or country, insufficiently equipped and lacking water and provisions, were led into an ambush, disarmed of their guns by a trick, and massacred, fighting desperately with picks and swords, only two badly wounded men escaping to report the disaster to the fleet.

The news roused the fiery Portuguese to fury, and, instead of calming them, Manuel added fuel to the flames by pointing out that the men had got what they deserved as a reward for their mutiny and disobedience.

The rest of the fleet now broke out into open mutiny, and the soldiers announced their intention

of landing to avenge their comrades with an elected captain of their own if Manuel would not lead them. There was "such a riot that Manuel da Gama perforce agreed to go," and on the following day a party of 800 well-armed men was landed and marched inland to "seek the camp of the Moors;" but these had meanwhile quietly melted away, and the men had to return to their ships without accomplishing anything.

Soon afterwards the messenger sent to Lebna Dengel returned with pathetic entreaties from the king and others to send on the expedition, and Bermudez used these to inflame the Portuguese still further, so that the wretched Manuel "had continual trouble with the people until the Governor's return."

Fortunately Dom Estevao got back to Massawa on May 22nd, and had a great reception from the fleet. He handled the delicate situation with tact and firmness (though he had to throw over Manuel), and after consultation with all his principal officers decided that the expedition should be sent off as soon as it could be equipped.

There was tremendous enthusiasm to be of the party, so much so that the original limit of 300 had to be largely exceeded; as finally constituted, it consisted of 400 Portuguese musketeers, some artificers, a band of musicians, and about 130 servants or slaves. They were well-armed, carrying large reserves of musquets and ammunition, as well as a number of small cannon and ample supplies of stores of all kinds.

As for the command of the expedition, "several

honourable fidalgos at once begged for this employment," but Dom Estevao, who seemed to realise fully its desperate character, said that he would send none but Dom Christovão his brother whom he would sacrifice for the king in his service, but that he would not adventure another's son; for none could tell how the enterprise would turn out, and it was very doubtful if any would escape death."

The leader of this epoch-making expedition—younger brother of the Viceroy, fourth son of Vasco da Gama, Conde da Vidigueira, the great explorer and administrator—was a remarkable and romantic character. He was only twenty-five years old, but he had already distinguished himself greatly in the maritime wars and explorations of the Portuguese. He was brave and chivalrous to a fault, his indefatigable energy, utter contempt of danger, and cheerfulness under difficulties, bound his men to him with ties of the greatest affection and loyalty. His character is thus well summed up by Mr. Whiteway: "Bold to temerity in action, chivalrous in his dealings with women, ready to share the burden of the common soldier, foremost in the fight, and willing, though wounded himself to do the work of the wounded surgeon, Dom Christovão stands out as a true leader of men: as the man to whom, when he died, his faithful followers would elect no successor till they had exacted satisfaction for his death."

The brothers parted on July 9th, 1541, when amid the firing of guns from the fleet the intrepid

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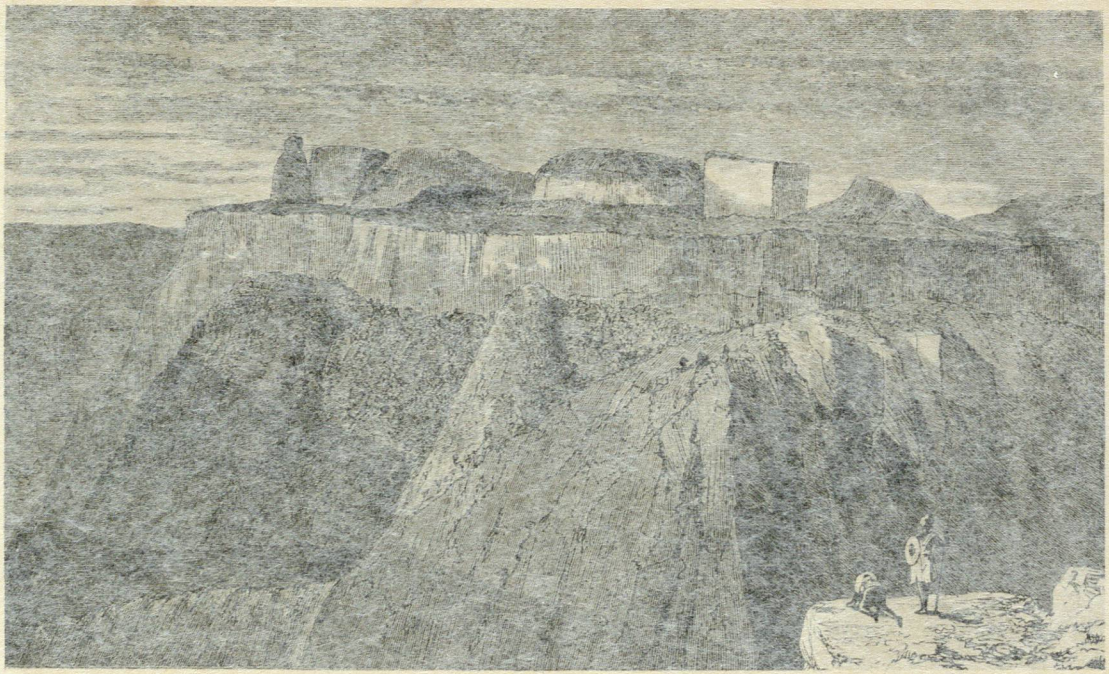

ZER AMBA

A typical amba or natural mountain fortress of which several were stormed by da Gama. The flat tops often provide well-watered sites for villages and the perpendicular sides complete natural protection.

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band set out on their crusade into the mountains of Abyssinia, the banners of Portugal and of their king waving above them, their steel helmets and corselets reflecting the burning rays of the African sun, a mere handful of men pitting themselves against the untold thousands of their enemies, but ready in their own words "to die for the faith of Christ and the salvation of that Kingdom."

And these were no idle words. For the leader himself and the majority of his followers were to meet with a frightful death within little over a year, while the pitiful remnants, joining forces with the Abyssinians, were to be successful in avenging their chief's death, and in driving the invaders out of the land forever, though hardly a dozen men amongst the Portuguese were to see their own country again.

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CHAPTER XII

THE START INLAND

The story of the chivalrous crusade led by Dom Christovão da Gama, little more than a forlorn hope indeed, is not only recorded by contemporary writers such as Correa, but, what is far more interesting and valuable, by two persons who actually took part in the expedition.

These two were men of widely different character and attainments. Dom Miguel de Castanhoso was a man of good family, of Spanish descent, and was one of that remarkable band of adventurers who carried the Portuguese flag over so much of the then unknown world. He was a loyal and faithful follower of da Gama, and his book, which was first published in Lisbon in 1564, bears tribute on almost every page to the qualities of his leader, and the affection in which he was held by his little band of followers.

João Bermudez, on the other hand, was an ignorant and uneducated person; Bruce refers to him as "a simple ill-bred zealot, exceedingly vain," and also describes him as "ignorant, bigotted and ill-mannered." In the first Portu-

guese expedition under Dom Roderigo da Lima he appears to have been the "barber bleeder" to the party, and Alvarez always refers to him as Mestre João. He may have been a priest as he claimed to be, but, as he has already pointed out, there are few if any grounds for reposing the slightest belief in his statement that he had been proclaimed "Patriarch" of Abyssinia—by any save himself.

Many of his other statements are palpably untrue; he was a quarrelsome and disloyal follower, and it is unfortunate that his book, first published in Lisbon in 1565, should have become more widely known than that of Castanhoso.

There is some interesting correspondence between King Galawdewos of Abyssinia and King John of Portugal concerning these two men. Regarding Castanhoso the Abyssinian monarch writes:

"This has been written respecting Miguel thy servant—whom the Governor sent with Dom Christovão da Gama, Commander, to help us in time of war. This Miguel shewed much attachment to Ethiopia, and fought for Christ against the Musalmans exposing himself freely until his left arm was broken by a matchlock bullet: by the will of God he recovered from his illness, now we send him to thee. Treat him well remembering the love of Christ, and also for love of us. . . ."

In his reply King John writes to Galawdewos concerning Bermudez.

"As to what João Bermudez has done there

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whom the king your father sent me as his Ambassador, I disapprove greatly, for they are things very contrary to the service of Our Lord, and by reason of them it is clear that he cannot be given any help or assistance nor do I know more of him than that he is a mere priest. Of the powers which he says the Holy Father granted him I know nothing; from the letters of His Holiness you will learn better what has passed in the matter; although for this he merits very severe punishment, it appears to me that you should not inflict it, except in such a way that, his life being saved, he may be punished according to his errors; for if it be otherwise he still assuming the dignity of a patriarch which he wishes to usurp, though no one has given it to him, and exercising such powers even unjustly, it would be a great discredit to Christianity, to learn that you had punished him in any other way. . . ."

These documents, and the ample further evidence available, dispose effectually of Bermudez's claims to the patriarchate, and as a result throw discredit on the rest of his narrative, in so far as it differs from the simple straightforward tale told by Castanhoso. It is consequently on the latter's evidence that the story of da Gama's expedition is based.

The Abyssinian chronicle which records the momentous events of this king's reign (1540-1559) was written in the reign of his successor—his brother King Minas—and the MS. brought back from Abyssinia by James Bruce in 1773 is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and has been

translated by Conzelmann. From this document it is possible to obtain the Abyssinian point of view, and it is one thoroughly in keeping with their national characteristics.

For whether it be due to ingratitude, or to a vain desire to retain as much glory as possible for their own king and their own achievements, the fact remains that, apart from some tributes to the courage of the Portuguese, these very gallant men are hardly mentioned at all, and receive little or no credit for the immense achievement that was undoubtedly theirs of freeing the country from the foot of the invader.

A later and more abridged Abyssinian chronicle, part of which refers to this same period, has also been translated by M. René Basset; and to this the same criticism may be applied, but in an even greater degree.

The Arab chronicle *Futuh el Habasha*, by Arab-Faqih, also translated by M. René Basset, deals only with the period of uninterrupted success of Grañ's conquering hordes from 1527 to 1535, *i.e.* between the departure of the first Portuguese mission in 1527 and the arrival of da Gama's expedition in 1541, so that it is of little value for the purposes of this part of the narrative.

We are therefore thrown back on the contemporary narrative of Castanhoso, which, as has been already mentioned, bears the stamp of truth and is supported by such evidence as is available.

He tells us that da Gama's party consisted of 400 Portuguese, all carefully selected volunteers; indeed so great was the rush of men of all ranks to

join the party that the original number of 300 was increased to the figure named. Among them were many officers, and men of standing; Correa says: "The most honourable men and fidalgos delighted to accompany him on this expedition, many of whom were his relatives"; there were also "over seventy persons trained in all trades, namely cross-bow makers, blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, shoemakers, armourers and other craftsmen . . . 130 slaves, good men to help their masters, and . . . trumpets, kettledrums and bagpipes."

"Their armament included 1,000 matchlocks, 1,000 pikeheads, and much powder bullets and lead and four falcons, swivel guns, twelve bases with their carriages, ten very good bombards . . . and all the necessary munitions in great quantities."

There was naturally difficulty in collecting transport, for though as a military expedition the party was small enough, yet it was vastly larger than da Lima's mission, and carried far more in the way of stores; and the transport difficulties of that unfortunate person had been immense, as has been recounted.

So a party of fifty men had been sent on ahead on June 12th, presumably to endeavour to "acquire" baggage animals and supplies, and in this they were remarkably successful. They were well received by a friendly Governor and with him they attacked and defeated two rebel chiefs who had thrown in their lot with the Moslems, and were able to send back to da Gama 200

baggage camels, many riding mules, and 300 cows as a present to the admiral, which however he refused to accept without payment.

Even so there were not riding animals for all, and so Dom Christovão elected to march on foot; his men, fired by his lead, all followed his example, and the whole of the animals were thus left free for the transport of their weapons and munitions, their stores of rice and sugar, baggage and other goods.

And so the gallant little party started off into the unknown, a ridiculously small number for the immense task in front of them, crossed the hot low-lying coastland, and plunged into the mountains that guard the ingress into Abyssinia.

The road was appalling. They had been troubled by "many wild beasts—very terrible;" on the plains the heat had been so great that they could march only by night; the artillery and supplies were carried on camels and mules, but when they got into the mountain passes the men had to handle much of the stuff themselves in the more difficult places.

They spent six days (July 9th to 14th) in unremitting toil of this kind, and during all this time their leader shewed them a wonderful example, encouraging the laggards, working and carrying himself, and "by this energy and zeal he doubled that of the soldiers."

So they reached the top of the plateau, where they rested for a couple of days in the lower temperature and more bracing climate of the Abyssinian highlands, probably on the site of

the modern town of Asmara; and then marched on for another three days through those pleasant surroundings to the town of Deborua, which the Portuguese call indifferently Barua, Baroa, Debaroa and Debarwa, and which has already been frequently referred to in connection with da Lima's expedition.

Here they were met by monks carrying crosses in solemn procession, and vast numbers of people hailing them as deliverers from the Moslems, against whom they demanded vengeance "with such clamour that truly there was none who heard them but was ready to weep a thousand tears."

At Debaroa the Portuguese halted, and da Gama took stock of the position in consultation with some of the Abyssinian chiefs who were still loyal to their harassed king.

Things were very much worse than the Portuguese had been led to suppose. The eighteen-year-old emperor Galawdewos had succeeded to a devastated kingdom, the major part of which was in the hands of his enemies; the Abyssinians had in whole districts deserted to the standard of the conquerors, who traversed the country in all directions at will; the principal nobles had been slain or had deserted or were in hiding; the stores of national wealth accumulated in churches and fortresses had been carried off; fields were untilled, and famine and disease stalked through the land.

But Galawdewos was animated by the same spirit as his father, and gathering together a

devoted band of followers he took advantage of the sense of false security into which the Moslems had been lulled by their succession of victories, fell upon them suddenly and gained a signal victory, which had the immediate effect of bringing back many of his people to their allegiance, and when he marched north he was joined by the fierce Agaws of Lasta, to whose ruler he was related through his mother.

He gained another victory in the north, but then, whether owing to a defeat, or the lack of provisions, or the defection of his followers (the chronicle does not make the point clear), he was forced to leave Simien and Tigré in the north, and to take refuge in Shoa in the south.

He was here—probably at Tegulet—some five hundred miles from the Portuguese when they reached Debarua on July 17th, separated from them by mountainous and difficult country, and accompanied by a mere handful of men numbering a few hundreds.

Between him and the Portuguese lay the Moslems on the northern shore of Lake Tana, many thousands strong, armed with matchlocks and small cannon, in which respect they were far superior to the Abyssinian and probably equal to the Portuguese. They also possessed the advantage of a large number of mounted men.

The country all around had been pillaged and devastated so that supplies were very difficult to obtain, and though the friendly Abyssinians at first "gave daily to the camp ten very fat cows, larger than those of Portugal, and many

cakes of millet and of a grain called dackery, this only lasted a little while, and the Portuguese, in spite of the efforts of the Bahrnagast, the Governor of the coastal province, who had accompanied them on their march, were soon obliged to rely on raids and forays to keep themselves in food; "we suffered much misery because we had to take by force of arms what we required."

Moreover, as the rainy season was then at its height, the Abyssinians pointed out to them that they could not possibly march to join the king for several months, at least until October, as the country would be quite impassable.

One piece of good news however leavened this mass of depressing information. The Queen-Mother, Sabela Wangel, widow of the unfortunate King Lebna Dengel, who had died in the preceding September, and mother of King Galawdewos, was close at hand in one of the impregnable "ambas," or natural flat-topped mountain fortresses with which the country abounds, and it appeared both feasible and eminently desirable that they should join forces with her, inasmuch as this would strengthen their position in the country, induce loyal Abyssinians to combine with them, and make it easier to get supplies. "In this way she would be better obeyed and we better received," says Castanhoso.

Promptly da Gama sent off a messenger to the queen, saying that he would send a hundred men to fetch her if she would join him, and the

unhappy lady, who had been practically imprisoned in the fortress for at least four years, and probably longer, was only too delighted to accept the invitation and to meet the long-hoped-for deliverers of her country.

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CHAPTER XIII

JOINING FORCES WITH THE QUEEN MOTHER

Queen Sabela Wangel is the second of the three remarkable women who figure in this period of *sturm und drang*. Queen Helena, regent for King Lebna Dengel, had, as has been described in the earlier chapters, been instrumental in securing the despatch of da Lima's Mission to the Abyssinian court, and it was left to Sabela Wangel, celebrated in Abyssinian chronicles for wisdom and courage as great as that of Helena herself, to carry on and complete the task of freeing her country from the invader.

Contrary to the usual custom of Abyssinian monarchs at that time, Lebna Dengel had limited himself to one wife, according to one chronicler, " because the grace of God inspired him with the love of holy marriage which consists in marrying only one wife according to the canons of the Christian Church."

Another chronicler however attributes this continence to the fact that he was " fascinated by her beauty " and her other remarkable qualities ; while yet another relates that when one of his

subject kings sent him his daughter as wife, he rejected the lady, not because he already had one wife, but "because she had large front teeth, and when he saw her he did not like her."

But, whatever the reason, the king had only this one wife during all his lifetime; and in the old chronicles we find this reference to her qualities:

He (*i.e.* King Lebna Dengel) introduced into his palace "A woman who was beautiful, who put all her pride in carrying out the wishes of her husband, even as Sarah did to Abraham; he made her queen and sat her on his right covered with robes of gold, and so richly clothed that she forgot her people and her family. . . . She gave him blessed sons and daughters who were round his table like young olive plants; as for her he kept her in his palace like a fresh vine."

She had four sons and three daughters. The eldest son Fiktor was killed fighting against the Moslems, and the youngest Minas was taken prisoner by them; the second was King Galawdewos, and the third was imprisoned with his mother on Debra Damo.

After the death of that masterful lady, the ex-regent Queen Helena, Sabela Wangel developed other and more valuable qualities than those attributed to her by the chronicler.

Although for the last few years of her husband's reign she had been shut up in the fortress of Debra Damo while he was hunted from pillar to post by the all-conquering Grañ, yet she managed to maintain communications with the Portuguese, joined them as soon as they

approached her retreat, "helped them with prudence and wisdom, and supplied them with provisions and all that was necessary," and remained with them during the fighting that followed, and even after their defeat.

The Portuguese were full of admiration for her many qualities, combining as they did the firmness of a man with the tenderness of a woman, and they pay ample tribute to "her steadfast courage in adversity, her kindness and attention to the wounded, and to her shrinking from the carnage of the fights."

Later on she shewed marked diplomatic qualities. Although she wisely opposed the introduction of the Roman Catholic religion into Abyssinia as being contrary to the national feeling, and stiffened her husband's resistance to it, yet her influence was always used in softening the anger of Galawdewos, and later on of his brother Minas, against the Portuguese when in after years religious troubles arose; and it was due to her that the negotiations with the Moslems resulted in the release from captivity of her second son Minas and his accession to the throne after the death of Galawdewos.

The account of her reception of da Gama's officers in her mountain fortress, and of her arrival in the Portuguese camp, is delightfully picturesque.

The two officers sent to fetch her, Manuel da Cunha and Francisco Velho, pitched their camp at the foot of the mountain, which was "of solid rock so preciptous that it seemed cut with a pickaxe. It was about eighty fathoms high up

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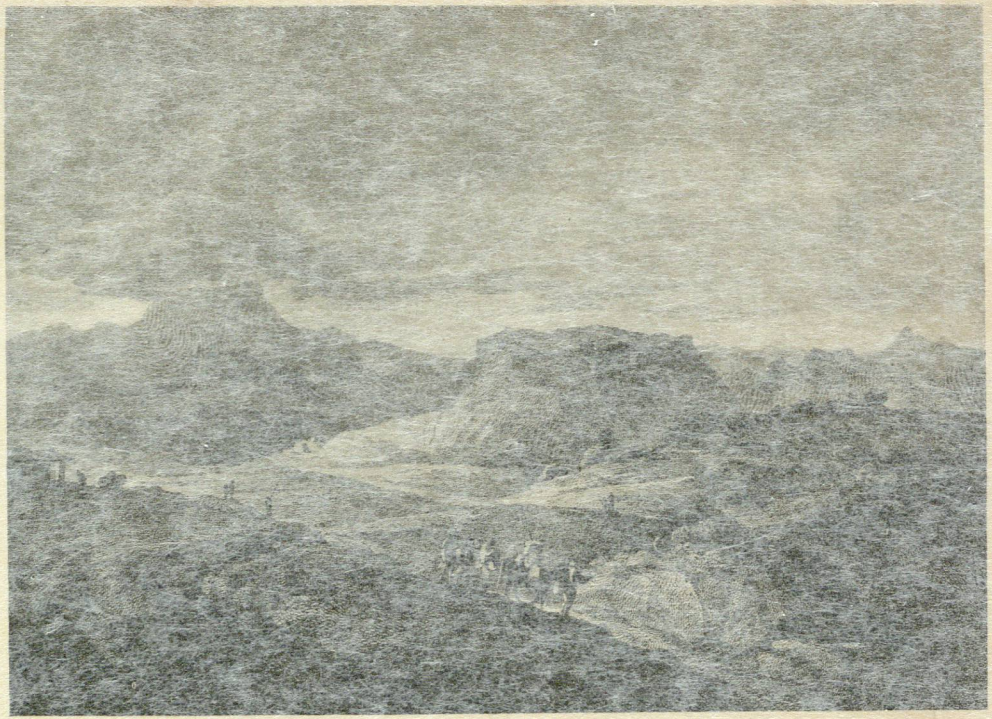

DEBRA DAMO

One of the most celebrated rock fortresses in Abyssinia. Here the Queen-Mother had been in refuge for several years until relieved by da Gama, and here the Portuguese stored their reserves of arms, etc., when marching south.

cows to drag the carts (there were twenty-four of these strange vehicles); and in order to keep themselves in good fighting trim carried out a few raids in the neighbourhood, and thereby acquired a supply of riding mules.

They had to keep a careful guard over their camp night and day, for the Moslems were watching their movements closely; Castanhoso narrates that two of Grañ's spies were caught in the camp, and tells how, after they had been "interrogated" —it may be imagined what form this took—da Gama "ordered them to be pulled to pieces by the carts: at which sentence the Abyssinians were terrified, so that no one would again run into this danger."

The strain of cruelty here apparent in da Gama's otherwise very fine character is exemplified by other instances quoted by Correa; for example, Dom Christovão proclaimed that any deserters would be treated as traitors, and, if slaves would be burned alive! In fact, three slaves, ran away, but were caught and their heads displayed in the camp, while a Portuguese who deserted had both his hands cut off; after which the chronicler remarks naively: "no one else dared to leave the camp."

No doubt the circumstances made drastic discipline and awe-striking examples necessary, for the situation of the little party in the midst of a by no means friendly population, terrified by the devastation wrought for years by the armies of the Moslems, who were at no great distance, was a hazardous one.

The rainy season passed however without serious fighting, and the preparations for the journey proceeded apace, so that on December 15th, 1541, the little army was able to set out with all its impedimenta, cheered by letters which had arrived from the king for Queen Sabela Wangel and Dom Christovão " in which he wrote pleasant words . . . that the people of his country had a prophecy made many years before the kingdom was overrun, that it would be recovered by white men come from far."

which there was a path with many turns, by which only one man at a time could ascend, who could with difficulty climb two thirds of the way up . . from this point they could only ascend in a basket, which was let down from above through a hole made in the rock."

The two captains clambered up "in full dress," and were then hauled up in the basket to the presence of the queen, who overwhelmed them with questions as to Dom Christovão and the Portuguese, whom she called her children.

She descended from the hill the same day, and spent the night in the Portuguese camp below, and "when the queen found herself away from the hill she gave many thanks to God, weeping with pleasure for his great mercy in allowing her to leave that hill where she had been imprisoned for so many years."

It must indeed have been a grim place; Castanhoso says: "Below the summit the hill is of this kind. It is squared and scarped for a height double that of the highest tower in Portugal, and it gets more and more precipitous near the top, until at the end it makes an umbrella all round which looks artificial and spreads out so far that it overhangs all the foot of the mountain so that no one at the foot can hide himself from those above."

The immense size of the place may be gauged from the fact that on the summit wheat, barley, millet and other vegetables were grown, and goats and fowls kept in sufficient quantities to maintain a population of 500 persons, and this

settlement lived there in safety and comfort in spite of Grañ and his Moslems besieging it for a whole year, " not out of the desire for the treasures that were in it . . . but to get the queen into his hands whom he much desired as she is very beautiful."

Early on the following morning the queen with a following of about thirty women and fifty men, mounted the mules that had been sent for her, and, amid their escort of 100 Portuguese, marched to Dom Christovão's main camp.

" She was received by him and his troops very nobly, for by his order all were in full dress and in ranks, the captains with their soldiers, all matchlock men, with their banners of blue and white damask with red crosses, and the royal standard of crimson and white damask, with the cross of Christ heading the rest of the troops. The commander, a great gentleman, clothed in hose and vest of red satin and gold brocade with many plaits, and a French cape of fine black cloth all quilted with gold, and a black cap with very rich medal, the captains and fidalgos and others with the best equipments they had, which were very fine."'

What a wonderful picture it must have made among the towering mountains of Abyssinia, these stout-hearted adventurers, arrayed in silks and satins, the sun glittering on their pikes and lances, firing their artillery and matchlocks, going through their drill, advancing and retiring in open and close order; while, hidden behind the silken veil held up by her savage followers, the

queen, muffled to the eyes in her garments, and riding a mule led by the lord of the country naked to the waist as a sign of respect, watched amazed this new method of conducting war, "giving many thanks to God for such delight as this for it gave her a hope of renewed prosperity."

There followed speeches of greeting and more firing of arms, playing of fife and drum, and then the queen and her followers retired to their tents.

The precise spot where all this took place is not clear, for it is a remarkable fact that Castanhoso does not give the names of either the town near which they passed the rainy season, or the rock fortress where the queen had been staying, though he gives a full description of both, and says they were only a day's march apart.

From this description historians, contemporary and otherwise, have jumped to the conclusion that the town was Debarua, which was an important place in those days, and which still exists, and that the fortress was Debra Damo, the historical amba where King Lebna Dengel died, and on which it had been the practice for centuries to incarcerate the royal princes in accordance with the barbarous custom which has already been described.

But these two places are in fact sixty miles apart as the crow flies—probably eighty or ninety miles' marching distance at least—across exceedingly difficult and mountainous country, including the arduous crossing of the River Mareb, and it would have been utterly impossible to do that distance in a day. It would have been far

more likely to take a week or more, for the Portuguese had taken eleven days' marching to do the 100 miles from Massawa to Debarua.

So that either the Portuguese must have advanced beyond Debarua before sending for the queen, or the queen was not at Debra Damo; but it is impossible from the Portuguese, Abyssinnian, and Arab records available to clear up this point.

The probability is that, if the queen were really at Debra Damo, as seems likely, the Portuguese advanced beyond Debarua, and halted near Debra Damo while they sent forward a small party of one hundred men to fetch the queen; and that then after the queen had joined them they returned to Debarua until the end of the rains. But this is of course merely a conjecture.

Be that as it may, and whether the Portuguese headquarters was at Debarua or another town in the neighbourhood, they remained there during the rains for five months, and busied themselves with their preparations for their great march south to join the king.

First of all they fortified the camp; then they set to work to make carts for the transport of their guns and stores. In this work da Gama took an intense interest: "he arranged it as if he had been a carpenter all his life, and it was his pleasure to spend all his days at it." They had to cut and saw the logs themselves, for "the natives of the country have not the wit for anything."

They used the barrels of old matchlocks to make runners for the carts, which seem to have been more like sledges; trained bullocks and

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CHAPTER XIV

THE MARCH SOUTH AND THE FIRST VICTORIES

Five months after leaving the coast Dom Christovão started on his fateful march south. It was a martial and picturesque little body that set out through the towering Abyssinian mountains, and the disciplined order of this march must have been a revelation to the 200 Abyssinians who accompanied them—the total contribution that the country could give them in troops.

Da Gama had appointed five captains, to each of whom he gave a company of 50 men; the names of these men have been preserved in Castanhoso's narrative, and they are as follows: Manuel da Cunha, João da Fonseca, Inofre de Abreu, Francisco de Abreu and Francisco Velho.

There remained 150 Portuguese, and these were "appointed to the Royal Standard," and were placed under the remaining officers, all under the command of Luiz Rodriguez de Carvalho.

Two companies of 50 men each marched with the sledge carts that had been constructed with so much labour; two more guarded the droves of cattle and the "oxen laden with the goods of the army," which were driven by the 200 Abyssinian allies; in the rear was the queen guarded

by Castanhoso himself "with 50 Portuguese all arquebusiers with their arms loaded and matches lighted"—incidentally this last-named party must have found it extremely awkward to march thus armed over the amazingly rough country they had to traverse.

Dom Christovão himself, accompanied by four horsemen, inspected the whole line of march twice a day, helping with the transport of the carts, which gave them much trouble, for in some places the oxen could not drag them, and they had to be lifted and carried on the men's shoulders.

The position of the various *dramatis personae* at this time was about as unfavourable for da Gama as could well be imagined.

The Portuguese were in the north at Deborua; the emperor with a very small following was in the south at Tegulet in Shoa, some five hundred miles away as the crow flies; and almost midway between them, slightly to the west, Grañ lay at Darasgê on the northern shores of Lake Tana, equally able to fall on one or the other as he pleased before they could join forces.

While the general direction of Dom Christovão da Gama's march south is easy enough to trace, it is unfortunately impossible to map it out exactly, or even to identify with certainty or accuracy the sites of the three battles he fought, and the two mountain fortresses he captured on the way.

Castanhoso, the only participant in the expedition who has left a written account of it (Bermudez of course is useless), gives few names, sometimes

none at all, and most of those that he gives are impossible to identify with known localities.

Various later writers have attempted to plot out the theatre of da Gama's exploits, but none with complete success, and the various positions suggested as the sites of the stirring events that now took place are all open to serious and obvious objection.

On the map here provided illustrating the Portuguese march south an effort has been made to trace an approximate route, but this must not be regarded as anything more than a general indication of the direction—which, as has been already said, is all that can be deduced from the conflicting data with any degree of confidence.

They pushed south from Deborua through the mountain passes for eight days, and then they reached a mountain fortress, which surrendered to them without fighting; they spent Christmas week here, and astonished the queen exceedingly by the elaborate ceremonial with which they kept the feast.

In a large tent fitted up with an altar "Mass was said by the patriarch and the Portuguese Mass priests who were in our company. We remained all night armed before the altar, and the matins were very solemn for such a country, as we had bagpipes, kettle-drums, flutes, trumpets and the full Mass."

The queen was so much interested that "to get a better view she and one of her ladies, both muffled, left the tent so secretly that her own servants did not miss her . . . thus she went

about seeing all that passed, and in this had much pleasure."

After spending the octave of Christmas at this place, which it is not possible to identify, the little army marched on again and shortly reached "a very high hill so extended that it borders all that country"; it took them three days to drag their carts to the top of it.

On it was "a city which from the outside looked very fine with windows and white walls: the houses were terraced above and inside arranged after the Moorish fashion," a most unusual phenomenon in Abyssinia.

Sir Clements Markham identifies the place with the village of Barakit, some ten miles south of Senafé, but the descriptions of the two places do not seem to tally very well.

There is however one feature in common which is very striking. Castanhoso says that above the city on the highest point was a hermitage, reached by a narrow winding path, and nearby was a small house in which were some three hundred men, more or less desiccated, sewn up in very dry skins, the skins much decayed, but the bodies entire.

They are supposed to have been the bodies of St. Romanos and three hundred Christian martyrs, a Greek or Egyptian monk of the sixth century, who dwelt here with his flock and was miraculously kept alive by eating grass.

That the bodies had lasted all that time is of course possible, for the cold is intense there; Castanhoso says: "I was never in such another

queen by telling her that "she should fear nothing as they were Portuguese"; and then set to work to lay his plans for the attack.

He made a feint attack to find out the disposition of the defenders, during which Castanhoso says: "it is difficult to believe how thick the stones and arrows fell when we got near, and they let fall rocks from the hill above, which caused us great fear and damage."

At dawn the next day the real attack was made at three places simultaneously, and covered by the fire of their small cannon and matchlocks the Portuguese swarmed up the cliffs. "Dom Christovão headed the climb by the help of his pike and of fissures in the rocks; here many were wounded and all twice beaten back."

But they were not to be denied. At the third attempt we forced our way in, Dom Christovão being among the first, and he certainly gave this day proof of his great courage; it was his valour that rendered the capture of the pass easy."

They drove the Moslems headlong before them into the inner and topmost enclosure, pressing on them so hard that they could not close the gates. Here the enemy commander fought like a man, killing two Portuguese with his own hand before he was brought down; and then followed a grim massacre of the garrison: "all were killed by the Abyssinians, who delighted in doing it." They had apparently left the dangerous part of the work to their allies.

The Portuguese had lost heavily in this gallant feat of arms; eight were killed and over

forty wounded, and da Gama decided to rest here for the whole of February while the wounded recovered from their hurts. He also sent back a party of forty men, under Dom Francisco Velho to Massawa to try and get reinforcements and supplies from the fleet, which he hoped would have returned there; messengers had come in from the coast sent by Dom Estevao Da Gama seeking news of his brother and promising anything they wanted.

Dom Christovão sent back a message full of burning hope, saying that he had reduced to obedience to the queen forty leagues of country, "merely through dread of the Portuguese name;" the effect of the recent victory had been to induce the population to come in with an abundance of supplies. He hoped his party of forty men, being lightly armed and mounted on captured horses, would get to Massawa and back in thirty days, and he was anticipating an early junction of forces with the emperor.

But, unfortunately, matters were not to continue in so prosperous a fashion.

As da Gama was to learn later, the Portuguese fleet had been driven away from the coast by Turkish galleys; his party of forty took much longer than had been anticipated on their journey, and their absence was severely felt in the fighting that was soon to take place; the emperor was a long way off, and had no force to speak of at his command.

In ignorance of all this da Gama shifted his camp some thirty miles south-westward on to

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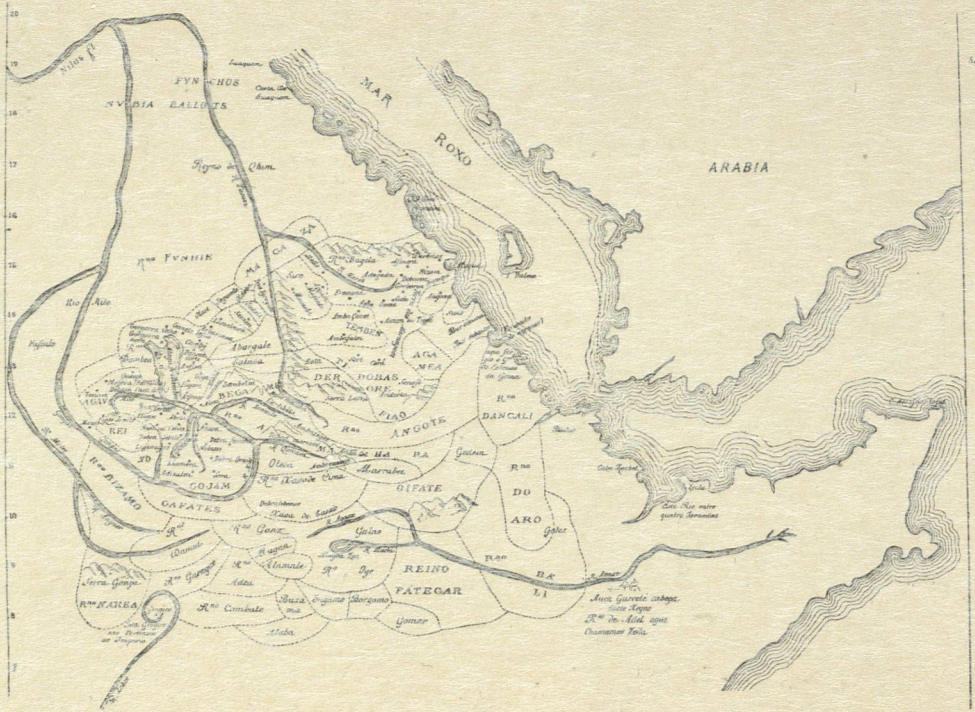
"A carta do manuscrito é uma
porte in data de 1852


MAR ROXO
ARABIA
FYN-CHOS
NVBIA BALLOTS
Rio Nilo
Rio Nilo
Rio Nilo

country, for it was so cold and the air so dry that we thought that we should all die . . . it is nothing for dead bodies to dry up on that hill, for the living run much risk."

Sir Clements Markham says these bodies were still there in 1868—over three centuries later; and assuming that it was the same place as that described by the Portuguese it is probable that they are there still, though I have not traced any other European traveller's reference thereto.

The Portuguese took some bones from them as holy relics, and left them to their undying vigil among the mountains; then, after a few days' rest, they pressed on over level ground and through plains into the Agame country, where they spent a week, witnessing the striking Abyssinian ceremony of *Temkat* (Epiphany) held on January 19th.

"The Abyssinian patriarch and all the ecclesiastics went to the river, and the patriarch blessed the water where the queen and the others were to bathe; after the blessing the queen, all covered with many cloths so that she could not be seen, went undressed into the water and bathed, and her ladies did likewise. The patriarch and all the friars and priests went a little apart and washed themselves, and then went to say Mass with great music and festivity, in which the whole day was passed."

This is a very much milder and more decent performance than that described by Alvarez (see pages 116-7).

The next day they went on their journey, and for ten or twelve days marched slowly on, not doing

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more than two or three leagues a day (a Portuguese league being rather over three and three quarter miles), possibly owing to the difficulty of the roads, possibly owing to a desire to gain influential adherents, a good many of whom actually joined the queen, without however bringing any large forces with them.

On February 1st they reached the scene of their first engagement, a strong hill fortress in the middle of a plain, garrisoned by one thousand five hundred archers and bucklermen, and defended by three "passes" one above the other. The Portuguese called it Bacinete or Abacinete; it was probably Amba Sinaiti, which more or less fits the description given, and the locality, but it is impossible to be sure.

It was one of the first places captured by Grañ when he invaded Tigrê, and he obtained possession of it by treachery; it must have been an amazingly difficult place to storm, to judge by Castanhoso's description, and it was hardly surprising that the queen was intensely alarmed at the idea of attempting to take it by direct assault.

"There is no path save over slipping rocks entirely exposed to the summit, so that any stone would do great damage. Men can only climb up with naked feet to a projection: from this up is four fathoms (nearly thirty feet) and the rock is scarped with only a few holes chiselled out and some chinks, and over this one must proceed or clamber by help of spears."

But Dom Christovão was not in the least dismayed at the prospect, and he reassured the

some plains so as to be in a better position to obtain supplies from the surrounding country; and then, as his party had not returned from Massawa by the end of February, he marched on slowly southwards towards the country he names Jarte—probably Sahart. He must have moved exceedingly slowly, for he appears to have taken the whole of March to cover about one hundred miles; no doubt he found considerable difficulty in provisioning his own people and the growing number of Abyssinians who had joined him, for the country had been pillaged by Grañ, and the population were for the most part in hiding.

Grañ meanwhile had been marching rapidly north-east from Lake Tana to meet him, and on April 1st the two forces came into touch probably near Antalo, though Castanhoso gives no name to the site of the engagement.

There followed a delightful interchange of messages between Grañ and da Gama. Grañ's message was to the effect that "he marvelled greatly how he (da Gama) had the audacity to appear before him with so small a force; that indeed he seemed to be a mere boy, as rumour said, and innocent without experience. He did not blame him, and he as a pitiful king wished to have compassion on him, and for his boldness in facing him (a thing which had not happened in fourteen years in that country) he would pardon his great temerity on condition that he came over to him with all his Portuguese. That if he did not care to join him, that he could return to his own country, and that he assured him no evil should

befall him, and that he treated him with this magnanimity because of his age and inexperience.

To give point to this sarcastic effort he sent him a friar's cowl and a rosary of beads, "making us out all friars for so they call us."

It is needless to say that da Gama's fiery spirit prompted a suitable reply, and he gave the Moslem chief a Roland for his Oliver. He rewarded the herald with a "red satin garment, and a scarlet cap with a valuable medal," and then composed and despatched his answer by his own messenger, written in Arabic.

He said that he had been sent by "the great Lion of the Sea," who had heard that the Christian King of Abyssinia had been defeated by "the infidels and enemies of our Holy Catholic Faith," that his party, though small, was enough to deal with "such evil and bad persons," and that the morrow would shew what the Portuguese were worth, "and that was not to go over to him for they obeyed no Lord save the King of Portugal whose vassals all the Kings of India, Arabia, Persia and the greater part of Africa were; and the same by the help of our Lord he hoped to make him."

And not to be outdone by the mockery of Grañ's gifts he sent him in return "small tweezers for the eyebrows and a very large looking glass, making him out a woman."

Castanhoso remarks blandly that this message "did not please the Moor," which was perhaps hardly surprising; but he sent back a courteous enough answer nevertheless to the effect that

people of such stomach who though few yet wanted to fight him were worthy that all kings should do them much honour and favour."

The time for words had now passed, and the two forces prepared to get to grips; as Grañ rode up to the top of a neighbouring eminence with three hundred horsemen to survey the field, it must have been a wonderfully striking sight that met his eyes.

Within their zareba on a path of rising ground the Portuguese were standing to arms, three hundred and fifty dauntless men, young and full of enthusiasm, "ready and armed, with powder pots in our hands, matches lighted for the artillery and matchlocks," dressed in their doublets and armour, with the great silken banner of Portugal waving in their midst.

All around the Portuguese position surged the army of Turks and Somals and Arabs which "with its bannerets slowly descended the hill and surrounded us. Such was their trumpeting drumming cries and skirmishing that they appeared more numerous and stout-hearted than they were."

And well might the Portuguese have quailed, for, as the vast hordes poured down from the hills and lapped forward towards them, they seemed like the waves of an engulfing sea; their numbers are put at 15,000 foot, all archers and bucklermen; fifteen hundred horse, and (most dangerous of all) two hundred Turkish arquebusiers.

The odds were about thirty to one, for there were no Abyssinians of any fighting value with

da Gama, and he had to rely solely on himself and his compatriots; his few native allies seem to have been content to look on until the result of the battle was beyond doubt.

The attack was pushed briskly; the Moslems put up a breastwork of stones near the camp, from which they did some considerable damage, so that a party of seventy sallied out and drove them off; Arab horsemen came up to their assistance, and the Portuguese had to fall back on their zareba at nightfall.

So the day and night passed and then da Gama decided that he must attack, for food and water were running short in the camp.

On April 4th the little force formed square; "the captains with their men in advance; the queen with her women and all the transport in the centre; the royal standard with the rest of the force in the rear," and "with matchlocks and artillery playing continuously on all sides so that we cleared the plain as we advanced," the Portuguese left the shelter of the zareba and pushed straight at their enemy.

It must have been a gallant sight, and it was certainly a desperately hard-fought battle. Time and again the Christians were nearly overwhelmed; their banner was captured, the ensign and three others with him falling in its defence; Manuel da Cunha fell wounded; the Turkish horse pressed them hard. But "all this while Dom Christovão was encouraging our people, always present where danger was greatest;" he was wounded in the leg by a bullet, but the loyal

Castanhoso says that " this was for him an honour, for wounded as he was he behaved himself, and acted as we find no example of any notable captain in ancient or modern histories."

The battle had been raging since daybreak, and now at midday the result still hung in the balance; at this moment a bullet wounded Grañ in the thigh and killed his horse under him; " his ensigns lowered the three banners that accompanied him: this was the signal of retreat; they lowered them three times, and then took him up in their arms and bore him away."

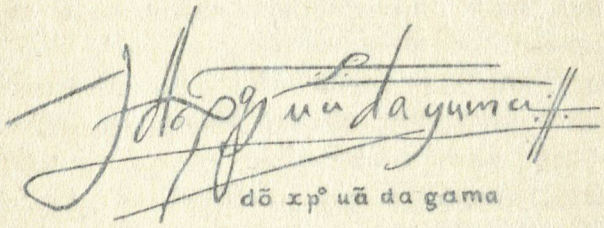
The great force lost heart and melted away; the Portuguese, " sounding trumpets and kettle-drums and shouting St. James charged with the Abyssinians who were with us in number about two hundred." The panic must have been great, for this ridiculously small party " slew many and followed them a space where the Abyssinians revenged themselves on the Moors, slaying them as if they had been sheep."

Unfortunately Dom Christovão had no horse-men with whom to follow up the victory, and his party were all weary and exhausted, so he had to give up the pursuit and returned to camp, where he laboured much, for he attended to all the wounded himself, for the surgeon we had with us was wounded in the right hand. " After attending to all the others he tended his own wound last of all."

And there was unfortunately ample scope for this work, in which he had found the queen and her women engaged " binding up the wounded with

their own head-gear," for eleven Portuguese had been killed and over fifty wounded, more than a sixth of the little force; the field was covered with the bodies of their enemies.

That very night da Gama sent off a messenger bidding him travel day and night to bring back the Portuguese who had gone to Massawa and any reinforcements to be obtained from there; then he rested in some mountains nearby for a fortnight, "both because the wounded could not carry arms, and in order to see if the Portuguese came."



FACSIMILE OF DOM CHRISTOVÃO DA GAMA'S SIGNATURE

(*From Castanhoso*)

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CHAPTER XV

VICTORY, DEFEAT AND DEATH

Although da Gama had succeeded in disengaging himself from the awkward situation in which he had been beleaguered by the Moslems, and had been able to drive them back and take up a more favourable position in some hills nearby, yet Grañ's forces had by no means been routed, and they had camped almost within sight of the Portuguese.

Da Gama was anxious to give his wounded time to recover, and also to await the arrival of his missing party of fifty from Massawa; but on the other hand he learned from his spies that Grañ was being reinforced daily by the garrisons he had called in from different parts of the country—one captain alone had joined him with five hundred horse and three thousand foot—consequently he determined to give battle again in the hope of winning a more decisive victory.

And so at daybreak on the Sunday after Easter, April 16th, 1542, the rays of the rising sun glinted on the headpieces and breastplates of the little band of crusaders as they formed up again in square, with the guns in the centre and marched

forward against the great forces of the enemy.

As they moved down the hillside to the plains below they were immensely encouraged by what they believed to be a sign of Divine help in the coming battle. For, wrought to a high state of excitement, "some of the Portuguese saw a man on a white horse in front of the army, armed with all arms, and carrying himself proudly, whom we all believed to be the Apostle St. James . . . when we reached the plain he disappeared and the Christians saw him no more, but the Moors saw him in the battle and said he wrought great destruction among them."

Castanhoso adds that "there can be no doubt but that without his help and chiefly that of our Lord we should never have been victorious."

It is a remarkable fact that this probably imaginary happening (paralleled by a well-known incident in our own Great War) should have been recorded both by Castanhoso and Bermudez, and by the Arabs themselves.

These were no less eager to come to grips, and a party of five hundred horsemen, led by the redoubtable warrior Garad Amad, who had defeated Galawdewos soon after his accession, hurled themselves at one corner of the little square, and fighting desperately died on the pikes of the Portuguese. Their example was followed on all sides, and in a little while the square was enveloped by the dense masses of the enemy, who were only prevented from breaking through by the fire of the Portuguese cannon and match-locks, which terrified their horses.

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But numbers were telling their tale; the Moslem forces, encouraged by Grañ, who, owing to his wound was borne on a litter, had almost succeeded in breaking through in one place—indeed some of the horsemen had actually got into the square—when a barrel of gunpowder caught fire and blew up at the weakest spot in the line. The explosion not only killed a number of men, but the fire and noise terrified the horses, which could not be brought to face the flames, and bolted over the plain.

Taking advantage of the confusion thus caused, Dom Christovão and his mounted men (eight in all!) "performed wonders especially among the Turks who approached nearest, many of whom were killed and wounded"; Castanhoso says: "they did such deeds that had they been done at any other time they would have been held in remembrance for ever."

The footmen did their share; "they threw fire bombs and powder pots which burned them"—"the artillery slew many," and then, "Dom Christovão saw that they were shaken, and we attacked them briskly and drove them before us till they took fright."

If the Portuguese had only had a hundred horse the whole history of the campaign would probably have been changed; for they would undoubtedly have been able to capture Grañ and so put an end to the war then and there. As it was, they pursued the flying enemy for a couple of miles, killing many, capturing their camp and much booty; but the wearied men could not

catch up the horsemen, who conveyed Grañ in his litter in headlong flight for eight days, leaving the plain strewn with dead, for as usual the Abyssinians were eager enough to be "in at the death," and spared no wounded.

It was a wonderful feat of arms, and the survivors must indeed have been proud men that day, though they had to mourn heavy losses for so small a party; fourteen Portuguese were killed and Castanhoso himself and over sixty were wounded, of whom four or five subsequently died of their wounds.

And then two days later the fifty Portuguese who had gone to Massawa to bring back reinforcements and supplies "returned sadder than can be believed, because they were absent from the battles, and because they had not succeeded in the business on which they had gone, nor had even seen our fleet because of the Turkish galleys who guarded the harbour."

But Dom Christovão did not allow himself to be discouraged by this; he sent off the most severely wounded of his men (Castanhoso amongst them), carried on litters, to recuperate in a hill fortress, and he himself set off with his Portuguese and Abyssinian forces in pursuit of Grañ.

The Moslem leader had been seriously alarmed by the result of his two engagements with the Portuguese. He had had an uninterrupted series of victories over the Abyssinians for over fourteen years, and now foresaw the possibility of losing the results of all his efforts at the hands of a small party of well-armed and disciplined foreigners.

Moreover, the people of the country, relieved of their terror of the invader by da Gama's successes, refused any longer to bring in supplies to Grañ, and the provisioning of so large a force in the face of a hostile countryside presented no small difficulty.

So with his accustomed skill and resource Grañ, after retreating south some way, withdrew to the east of the mountain chain that divides the highlands of Abyssinia from the lower country bordering on the Red Sea, and took up his position at Zabul (or in the country of Zabul), south-east of Lake Ashangi, where he was within striking distance of his enemy, but was able to obtain access to the Red Sea. Here he wintered, and whilst recuperating sent messengers and money to the Turkish commander of Zebid in Arabia asking for reinforcements.

Nor did he apply in vain, for during the rains, *i.e.* between May and September, he was reinforced by no fewer than nine hundred Turkish arquebusiers or matchlockmen (of whom he had had only two hundred ; ten field bombards (he had none of these before) ; and numbers of Arabs and Turkish horsemen, the latter " with gilt stirrups and their horses shod with iron."

Da Gama was unaware of this, and remained hutted in during the rains on a hill west of Zabul, probably the mountain plateau of Womberat rising out of the Wofla plains.

From this high table-land Zabul can be seen in the distance, but Grañ's operations taking place on the eastern side of the hills were screened

from da Gama's observations, apart from the question of the considerable distance between the two armies.

Zabul or Zobul is a land of mystery and legend for the Abyssinians; they say that in byegone ages there was an ancient Christian kingdom there, and that the bells are still heard ringing afar in the distance, though none can see them, because they are guarded and kept invisible by holy spirits.

Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, is supposed to have made his first settlement here on his way from Jerusalem to Axum; and Naakweto Laab, the last of the Lasta dynasty who surrendered the throne of Abyssinia to the Solomonean house in 1260, is still supposed to be wandering in this country awaiting the psychological moment when he is to return and declare himself as the King Theodore who, arriving from the East, will establish the millennium in Abyssinia.

These traditions were reported by both Dr. Beke and Sir Clements Markham in their respective works on the country; but Zobul is probably as savage and unsettled now as it was when Grañ camped there, and the Danakil population are unlikely to welcome searchers after folklore, so that it is improbable that further light will be thrown on the mysteries of the country at present.

But da Gama's restless spirit could not brook the inaction in his winter quarters, and, while there, news was brought him that stirred him to yet another remarkable feat of arms.

For the first time he learned how exceedingly

small were the forces at the disposal of the Abyssinian emperor, Galawdewos, a fact which caused him much depression and anxiety, for he had been looking forward to a junction of forces with a large Abyssinian army at the end of the rains, and a triumphant attack on Grañ.

The same messenger who brought him this news also told him that between him and the king's army lay a high hill known as the "Hill of the Jews," that the king must cross it before he could possibly join da Gama, and that he (the king) had a wholly inadequate number of men with him to enable him to storm it.

Promptly da Gama resolved to take the hill himself, and he was strengthened in his determination by the information that on the hill were a large number of horses, the lack of which had so much hampered him hitherto.

But the astonishing thing is that it is impossible to say with accuracy where this hill was, although from the details given it should have been easy enough to identify. Castanhoso and Bermudez give it no name, later chroniclers have placed it in a number of different positions, some west, some south, some near, some far, from where the Portuguese were at that time camped.

The points that emerge with any certainty from the mass of conflicting statements and theories are (1) it must have been south, because the emperor was in Shoa, and Shoa is south of Wofla; (2) it was across and near the Tacazze River, which almost surrounded it; (3) it was within a week's march, probably less; (4) it was

inhabited by Jews; (5) it had been recently captured by Grañ's people; (6) it was a large and typical Abyssinian steep-sided flat-topped Amba, inasmuch as the population is said to have been 10,000 to 12,000 and horses were bred on it.

The most likely spot to fill most of these qualifications is Wadela, but in making this suggestion I am aware that I am running counter to every hypothesis hitherto put forward, all of which are, as already pointed out, open to serious objection.

Be that as it may, da Gama resolved to capture the place, and with him to decide was to act. Guided by a Jew who promised to lead him to the top of a hill by an unknown path, "where he would not be discovered until he was at the top," he set off with one hundred men by night, so as not to attract attention.

To enable them to cross the Tacazze River they carried with them a lot of skins, and on reaching the river, which naturally enough at that time of the year (August) they found very much swollen, "they quickly cut a quantity of wood and branches, and with these and the skins filled with air, made rafts. . . . They crossed a few at a time taking their matchlocks powder and matches inside other skins, lest they should be wetted; thus they all got over, some by swimming."

They climbed the hill successfully, and took the garrison entirely by surprise, a fortunate occurrence, for it consisted of no less than three thousand foot and four hundred horse.

Forming up on the summit the little band, led

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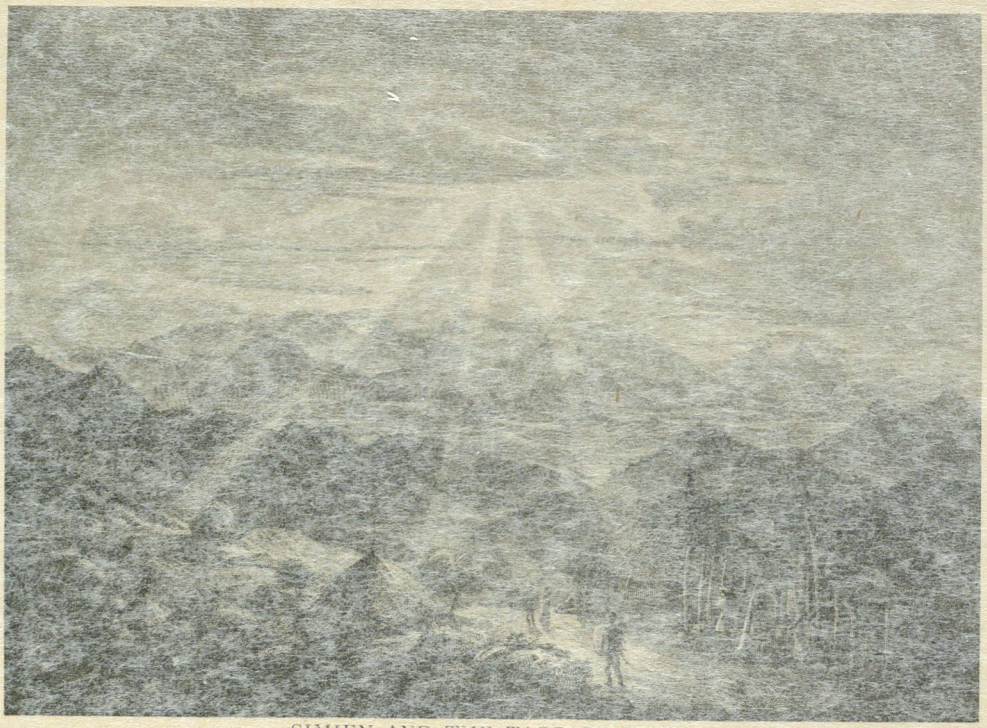

SIMIEN AND THE TACCAZE RIVER

Some of the country crossed by the Portuguese. The upper reaches of the Taccaze were the scene of one of da Gama's great feats of arms, the capture of the "Jews' Hill."

by Dom Christovão and his eight mounted men (they had brought horses and mules with them), with the royal standard in the centre, fell on the unsuspecting Moslems; the commander Sidi Mohammed fell by Dom Christovão's own hand, the other horsemen had each killed their man, and the foot "did nothing save slay the Moors," who broke and fled, the bulk of the fugitives being killed by the Jewish population of the Amba. The hill was won.

This rapid and successful blow was in fact, as will be seen later, a vital factor in the ultimate defeat of Grañ.

Then da Gama set to work to collect the spoil, and in addition to rich goods and valuable slaves he discovered to his great joy "eighty excellent horses and more than three hundred mules," though what had happened to the mounts of the four hundred enemy horsemen is not clear.

He made over the command of the hill to the Jew who had previously been in charge of it, with orders to hold it for the emperor; and then, leaving thirty men to bring on the horses from the Taccaze, hurried on back to his camp with the remaining seventy, travelling night and day, "dreading lest some disaster should have befallen us."

And in truth he had good cause for alarm, for Grañ, no doubt advised by his spies of da Gama's departure, and having received all the reinforcements he wanted, had moved out of his quarters to the foot of the hill where the Portuguese lay, and after pitching camp there

opened fire on them the very day after da Gama's return.

Now the latter realised the terrible mistake he had made in taking up his position so close to an enemy, who could from the nature of the country reinforce himself at leisure and unperceived. For the Portuguese were now not only vastly inferior in numbers, as they had always been, but they had lost their superiority in fire-arms, and had to face an enemy out-matching them in every way; they could not safely retreat, even if da Gama's spirit would have allowed him to adopt such a course; they were thirty men short of their full strength, and the horses they needed so badly had not yet come in.

Early on the following morning, Tuesday, August 29th, 1542, "the day of the beheadal of St. John the Baptist," the blow fell, and Grañ attacked with all his forces: artillery began to play on the Portuguese at daybreak, the Turkish matchlockmen, one thousand strong, advanced pouring their fire into the camp, and the great hosts of Islam hemmed them in on every side.

Dom Christovão's last fight is worthy of his reputation, for he played a great part that day. He had first of all visited all the defences seeing that the palisades were properly manned; then he took his share in repelling the attackers. When these pressed too closely on the camp, he sallied out repeatedly at the head of small bodies of men and drove back the assailants, instructing others of his captains to do likewise. But each time the little bands returned thinned in numbers, the

survivors all wounded; Dom Christovão was wounded in the leg; the enemy broke into the camp and many were killed there. "Dom Christovão wounded as he was went round the positions encouraging the men: for these are the days when leaders are recognised: I have no words wherewith even to express his courage when he saw his men very weary and the greater number wounded."

The queen and her women were tending the wounded in the centre of the camp, but shots penetrated even there, and some of them were hit. Bermudez disgraced himself and the Portuguese name that day—the only one to do so in that little band of heroes—by riding away up the hill; he endeavoured to induce the queen to do likewise, but da Gama prevailed on her to stay lest her example should cause a panic.

The two brothers da Abreu had been leading sortie parties all day long in a vain attempt to stem the engulfing torrent, each of the two alternately supporting the other as he charged and then fell back. Francisco fell, killed by a bullet; "when his brother saw this he ran to bring him in, forcibly driving off the Moors; lifting his brother to carry him in a shot struck him, and stretched him on the other; thus they both lay." João de Fonseca and Francisco Velho too fell leading desperate sallies from out the camp.

Then when midday was past Dom Christovão saw indeed that the day was lost. He collected such men as he could around the Royal standard, "there were not many now to fight for they had

slain the greater part of our people," and bidding Manuel da Cunha to cover him, he charged straight at the main body of the enemy, "driving them back over the field a great space."

As Castanhoso remarks bitterly, "Truly had we had the horses which were on the way the victory was ours," but great as was the effect of his last desperate effort it could not be sustained; da Gama was compelled to fall back wounded a second time, his right arm broken by a bullet; four of his captains were down; and he had perforce to stand on the defensive in his camp. Twice the Turks broke in, and twice the remnant of battered weary wounded men drove them out.

But night was falling; the survivors were all wounded and utterly exhausted; there were few left to guard the positions, or to rally to the standard.

So under cover of the darkness they decided to retreat; in spite of his furious objections Dom Christovão was placed on a mule, and with the queen led away up the mountain side, "the steepness of which was our safeguard as horsemen could only follow on slowly; but the foot did us much hurt as numbers followed us and slew many with arrows and stones."

And as this tormented remnant of the gallant band toiled up the mountain-side, the Turks burst headlong into the camp, and with shouts of triumph began their work of pillage, murder, and rapine amongst the wounded and the women.

But they were not to enjoy their triumph unscathed. One of the Portuguese, sorely wounded,

was lying outside the main hut in which were the bulk of the wounded, tended by the Abyssinian women—*and* the store of powder which was kept there as being the driest spot in camp. Roused by the cries and shrieks of the wounded and the women as the Turks fell on them, he dragged himself to the powder store, and "with a lighted match that lay handy" fired it, and thus at the cost of his own life put a term to the sufferings of all within, "for the house blew up, none escaping."

Heralded by the roar of the explosion, the fugitives were toiling up on their way through the mountains. In the darkness they broke up into three parties; a band of fifty under Manuel da Cunha, thinking they were the sole survivors, turned northward, and found their way to Massawa, where later messengers from the emperor overtook them and brought them back southwards, though not in time to share in the final triumph.

The main body of one hundred and twenty men with the queen and the banner they had saved pressed southward, and took refuge on the Hill of the Jews, which had been captured so recently as a result of Dom Christovão's valour and foresight; there ten days later they were joined by the emperor, "bringing very few people; so few indeed that had not Dom Christovão captured the hill it would have been impossible for us to have joined him or for the Kingdom to have been restored."

Thus the captured fortress served the threefold

purpose of affording a safe haven for the Portuguese, opening the road northwards to the emperor and providing a place of junction for the two forces where they could refit and combine their future plans, and whence they could rally the countryside to their assistance.

The smallest though most important of the three parties into which the Portuguese split was that accompanying their wounded leader, consisting as it did of only fourteen men.

All of them wounded, and utterly exhausted with their efforts in the day-long battle, they struggled on through the night, and at dawn turned off from the track and took shelter in some thick woods, where they dressed Dom Christovão's wounds, killing the mule he was riding in order to obtain the fat from it for the purpose—a strange dressing indeed.

His pursuers had been hard on his trail and had indeed overshot the place when he had turned into the woods; advised of this, they came back on their tracks, and by ill luck discovered his resting-place.

There are conflicting accounts of how this happened. Castanhoso says that the devil disguised as an old woman ran across the path in-front of the Arabs, and they, following her, came upon the Portuguese. He says that "it is impossible that that old woman can have been anyone save the devil as she vanished from among them and was never seen again," a delightfully conclusive piece of reasoning.

Other writers imply that Dom Christovão's

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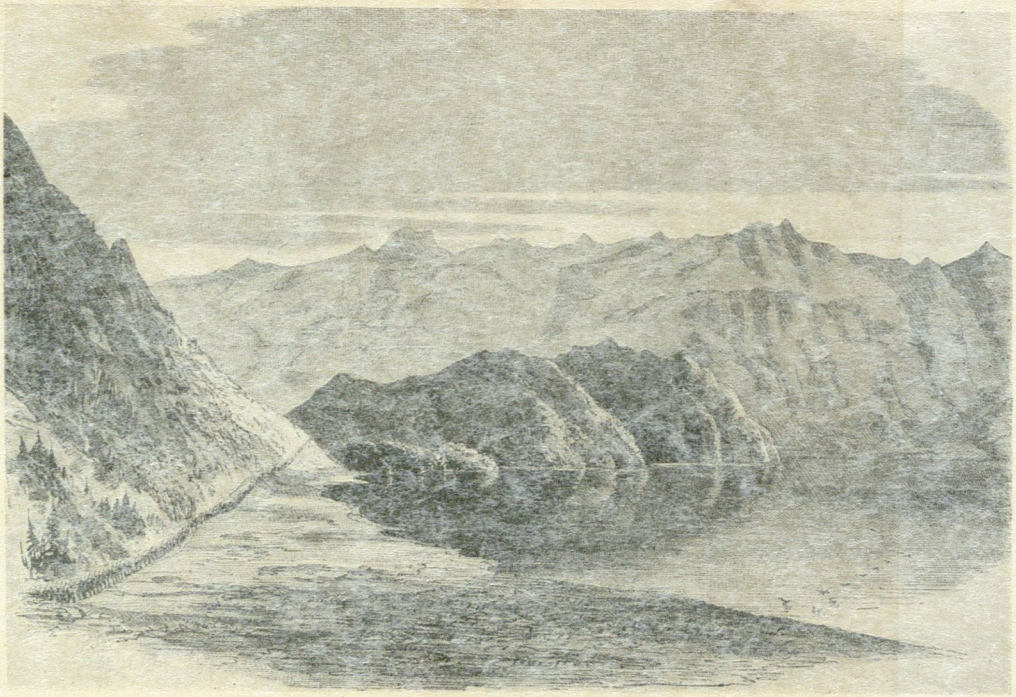

LAKE ASHANGI

The scene of the defeat of the Portuguese under da Gama by the Moslem forces under Ahmed Grañ.

(By permission, Illus. London News.)

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hiding-place was betrayed by a woman, an Arab captain's wife whom he had appropriated, but there is no evidence for this tale, though some credence has been given to it. It is more probable that he was captured in the ordinary course of pursuit, for the Moslems would naturally concentrate on the person of the leader of the enemy forces, who had in so short a time acquired such a great reputation.

Be that as it may, he and his companions were brought into Grañ's camp amid great rejoicings and there, according to the story of one of them who escaped later, Dom Christovão was most barbarously and damnably treated.

This gallant gentleman, sorely wounded, a bullet in his leg, his right arm broken above the elbow, was stripped, bound and scourged and his face buffeted with his shoes: "of his beard he made wicks and covering them with wax lighted them: with the tweezers that he had sent him he ordered his eyebrows and eyelashes to be pulled out, saying that he had always kept them for him as he and his followers did not use them."

He shewed him the mutilated remains of one hundred and sixty Portuguese who had fallen in the fight and heaped insults on him; but nothing could break da Gama's spirit, and at last, maddened by his captive's spirited replies and calm defiance, Grañ drew his sword and cut off the unfortunate man's head.

Around the place where da Gama died there sprang up a wealth of legendary tales. "In that

very place where his blood was spilt there started a spring of water which gave health to the sick who bathed in it."

Incidentally it may be mentioned that the healing properties of this spring were known to the Moslems, who admitted the miraculous happening, but attributed it to Divine recognition of their victory !

Castanhoso goes on to tell us that " that very day and moment in a monastery of friars a very large tree which stood in the cloisters was uprooted and remained with its roots in the air and its branches underneath, the day being very calm and still."

The friars who witnessed this latter phenomenon were, we are told, pardonably surprised, so much so that they noted the day and hour, and afterwards, when they heard of the death of Dom Christovão, they found that the tree was uprooted on the very day and hour that he was killed. But this was not all. On the very day when Grañ was defeated and killed, the tree replanted itself the right way up, and Castanhoso assures us that when he went to the monastery " I saw it with many of its roots exposed, all cut as the friars said, and it had only recently become green. As it was a great tree it was wonderful that it could stand on the ground with so few roots below the earth."

It is a remarkable testimony to the rapid and profound impression that Dom Christovão's personality had made on the Abyssinians during the short time he had been in the country that they

should have invented these tales, usually associated only with their kings and saints, in connection with a foreigner.

Thus died a most gallant and chivalrous gentleman; he gave his life to the cause he set out to serve, and though he did not live to see it, he laid the foundations of the success of that cause, and indeed secured its ultimate achievement.

For he had taught the Abyssinians that their enemies were not invincible; he had won victories with a mere handful of men against immensely superior forces; he had opened the way for the emperor to come northwards, and by his very death he inspired his compatriots who survived him to a high level of achievement in their burning desire to avenge him.

He was indeed a worthy scion of his great sire.

His head was sent to the Governor of Zebid together with the twelve Portuguese prisoners who had been taken with Dom Christovão; and after a three days' rejoicing to celebrate his victory, Grañ, thinking that all further danger from the defeated and dispersed Portuguese was over, sent back to Zebid the greater part of his matchlockmen and other Turkish troops, retaining only the two hundred he had had before, and marched west to Darasgé on Lake Tana to spend as he thought a well-earned holiday in those pleasant surroundings with his wife and family.

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CHAPTER XVI

FINAL TRIUMPH OVER GRAN AND THE MOSLEMS

As stated in the preceding chapter the emperor Galawdewos reached the "Hill of the Jews" with a few followers about the end of August, and on his arrival there he was received with much ceremony by the one hundred and twenty Portuguese survivors who paraded with the banner of the Holy Compassion at their head; the royal standard of Portugal had been lost in the fight. He was deeply affected at the news of the death of Dom Christovão, and of the defeat of his allies, whom he greeted warmly and supplied with tents, bedding and clothing, including silken tunics and breeches—where he drew them from is a mystery.

The hill now became the centre of much activity, and be it said of a certain amount of quarrelling and recrimination between the Portuguese and the Abyssinians, and among the Portuguese themselves.

For most of this Bermudez was, needless to say, again responsible; he appears to have requested the emperor in no measured terms to adhere to the Church of Rome, according to his

alleged promise, and to have been extremely offensive on meeting with a point-blank refusal.

The emperor also wished to appoint one Ariaz Diaz, a Portuguese half-caste who understood the language of the country, to succeed Dom Christovão in command, a suggestion which was hotly resented by the bulk of the Portuguese, many of whom were men of distinction and good family.

But, in spite of these difficulties, preparations for a fresh offensive went on apace. A party was sent off to Debra Damo to bring in the reserve supply of arms which Dom Christovão had placed in depot there—a fortunate move, for the Portuguese had lost most of their weapons in their recent defeat—and meanwhile they manufactured a large store of gunpowder from saltpetre and sulphur found on the Jew's Hill.

Then messengers were also sent off to bring back Manuel da Cunha and the fifty men who had fled into northern Tigré, but on hearing that these had pushed on to Massawa with the idea of taking ship for India the messengers returned.

Men from all the countryside around now flocked to the standard of Galawdewos, and by December he found himself at the head of eight thousand foot and five hundred horse, and the Portuguese, seeing this, pressed him continually to march against Grañ to avenge the death of Dom Christovão.

The emperor was apprehensive of trying conclusions with the Moslems until he had gathered a still larger force, but the insistence

of the Portuguese carried the day, and at length, on Shrove Tuesday, February 6th, 1543, the army set out. The backbone of the force was of course the little band of "One hundred and twenty Portuguese, some maimed, with wounds still open, who refused to stay behind as they were bent on vengeance or on death in the attempt." They were re-armed from the store on Debra Damo, and plentifully supplied with ammunition; above all they were filled with the spirit of their dead leader. "We bore before us the banner of Holy Compassion; the Preste had sought to appoint one of us captain, but we desired none save the banner or himself to lead us, for it was not to be anticipated that we should follow another, having lost what we had lost."

Impatient to get at their enemy they marched rapidly westwards towards Lake Tana; at Fogara (Castanhoso calls it Ogara) on the east of the lake they fell upon and defeated a force of Grañ's men, and then learned that Grañ was still at Darasgê, on the northern shore of the lake, about five days' march away.

Taking him completely by surprise, they pitched their camp opposite his among the mountains that fringe the great sheet of water, and there rather foolishly waited for a few days hoping for the arrival of the fifty Portuguese under da Cunha, who had heard of their intentions, and were reported to be marching south with all speed to join them.

Fighting between mounted parties of the two armies took place daily, for sixty of the Portuguese

had got horses, and they lost no opportunity of harrying their enemy. But by the misuse of the white flag one of the principal Abyssinian generals was led into an ambush and killed, and this so disheartened the Abyssinians that Galawdewos, fearing they would lose heart altogether, determined to attack without waiting any longer for the missing party of his allies.,

So on Wednesday, February 21st, 1543, the Abyssinian army, led by the small Portuguese contingent, advanced down the hill to the attack.

The numbers on this occasion were less uneven, for the Abyssinians had about nine thousand men against Grañ's fifteen thousand, of which only two hundred were matchlockmen. The battle was fought with great determination on both sides, but nothing could withstand the fury of the Portuguese onslaught, well supported on this occasion by their Abyssinian allies.

Ignoring all else, they drove straight on to where they saw the banner of Grañ waving above the fight, and then a Portuguese musqueteer, Joao the Galician, fighting his way almost single-handed through the men, shot the Moslem leader through the breast, paying for his gallantry with his life.

The effect was electrical. Dismayed by Grañ's death his followers broke and fled without even carrying off his body; his son fell into the hands of the Abyssinians, from whom he received honourable treatment; his wife managed to escape with a remnant of the Turkish musqueteers, most of whom were however killed by the Portuguese,

who concentrated their efforts on them, "as against them they were the most enraged."

The leader of these Turks fought a great fight. Seeing that the day was lost, Castanhoso says: "he determined to die; with bared arms, and a long broadsword in his hand, he swept a great space in front of him; he fought like a valiant cavalier, for five Abyssinian horsemen were on him, who could neither make him yield nor slay him. One of them attacked him with a javelin, he wrenched it from his hand, he houghed another's horse, and none dared approach him. A Portuguese horseman charged him spear in rest and wounded him sorely; the Turk grasped the spear so firmly that his assailant could not disengage it, and received a great cut above the knee that severed the sinews and crippled him. Nevertheless he drew his sword and killed the Turk."

The slaughter was great: "our people followed those on the battle field and in the camp so relentlessly that they thought of nothing else; and they gave quarter to none, save women and children whom they made captives."

The camp with much booty fell into the hands of the Abyssinians; Grañ's head was brought in on a spear and later "carried round and shewn in all his country, in order that the people might know that he was indeed dead who had wrought them such evils."

So was Christovão da Gama avenged, but the battle achieved far more than that. It was decisive for all time, so far as Moslem domination

of Abyssinia was concerned, for never again did an alien conqueror overrun the land, and Abyssinia was preserved as an outpost of Christianity in Africa until to-day.

Dom Christovão's followers had completed what he had set out to do and had commenced, and the apparently hopeless crusade of the four hundred had achieved success through failure and death.

It would indeed have been better and pleasanter if the story of Portuguese effort in Abyssinia had ended on this high note of success; if the victorious Portuguese soldiers had marched to the coast and taken ship to their native land to enjoy in peace the laurels they had gained in so much war.

But unfortunately this was not to be. The emperor desired, not unnaturally, to retain with him the tried soldiers who had helped him so much, for he could not at that time know how sweeping his victory was to prove. The King of Portugal was not anxious to withdraw the men who gave him a certain claim and hold on the fabulously wealthy land of Prester John, nor was it easy for him to do so on account of the Turkish command of the Red Sea.

And finally, the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome and Portugal were not likely to welcome any step which would lessen the chance of bringing this Christian country within their own fold.

So the Portuguese stayed on, and the way was paved for nearly ninety years of bickering, intrigue and disputes, ending disastrously for

those who sought by other means to convert da Gama's work to their own ends.

Reference has already been made to the scant recognition given by the Abyssinian chroniclers to their Portuguese deliverers; this lack of gratitude is well exemplified in the *Chronicle of Galawdewos*, written between 1592 and 1605, about forty years after the death of that monarch. The entire Portuguese campaign is dismissed in the following sentences:

"During that year the children of Tubal Cain, son of Japhet who were strong and valiant men panting for battle like wolves and hungry for fighting as lions came up from the sea coast. They helped the church in the wars against the Moslems, and at first they conquered, but when they thought themselves about to gain a complete victory, it was not granted to them; the Imam Ahmed gave battle, killed most of them and took their best warriors prisoner. He caused the death of their strong and valiant chief, a man with a heart of brass and iron in battle, and inflicted on him a death unworthy of him, after having captured and imprisoned him, treatment reserved rather for the feeble and infirm.

"All that happened to them because they were not fighting under the orders of Mar Galawdewos, to whom alone victory belonged. . . . That will appear from the manner in which the Imam Ahmed died at the hands of Mar Galawdewos."

But immediately after the battle there was no thought of anything but the victory, and nothing was too good for the Portuguese.

The news of the victory spread rapidly through the country, and thousands came into the emperor's camp by the great lake to make their submission, including of course many who perforce had gone over to Grañ to save their lives or their districts.

Some of these were given safe conduct into camp and a promise of pardon; among them one Yoram, a renegade. This man was, unfortunately enough for himself, recognised on coming into camp by the Portuguese as one of those who had captured Dom Christovão. They went to the emperor and represented that this man deserved death and should die; when the emperor replied that he had given him a safe conduct the Portuguese went to Yoram's tent and stabbed him. Castanhoso remarks that "his death did not annoy the Preste," but an event of this kind can hardly have made for harmony between the allies.

The Portuguese contingent under da Cunha, hastening back from Massawa, had pushed straight on southward to the "Hill of the Jews," and learning that the army had marched towards Lake Tana, turned immediately westward and followed hurriedly after them. The queen-mother, who had been left on the hill, as Castanhoso puts it a little ungallantly, "to have no incumbrance," refused to wait there any longer, and accompanied her Portuguese friends to the emperor's camp, where they arrived a few days after the great victory.

While resting near Tana after the battles,

Castanhoso evidently took the opportunity of exploring the lake and learning something about it, and while his account is interesting there is nothing very novel about it except some marvellous stories which presumably relate to hippopotami, though it would be difficult to recognise the animals from his description. Doubtless he repeated what he was told; his account is as follows:

"In this lake are bred certain creatures like sea-horses, which they must be; they are as large as big horses, and of the fashion and colour of elephants; their heads are exceedingly broad with very wide mouths; the arrangement of the lower and upper teeth is like they paint those of serpents; at the point of the jaws on one side and on the other two teeth jut out like an elephant's, but not so large; when they open their mouths it is a sight of wonder for truly a man of ordinary stature standing on the lower jaw would not touch the upper with his head, and in the width of its jaws two men together would fit. . . . They live below the water and when they come up they project great throatfulls upwards from their mouths, more than whales do."

After which, the reader is hardly surprised to learn from Correa (to whom Castanhoso gave his manuscript on his return) that "in this lake there are the mermaids, such as they paint, which are half women from the waist upwards, and from the waist downwards fish. This is what the people of the country tell, and they tell other

things very wonderful and difficult to credit, therefore I do not write them down." They must indeed have been wonderful!

They kept Easter here, and in describing the ceremonies Castanhoso tells us that the Abyssinians "do not spit in Church and if they want to do so they have a cloth into which they spit as they consider it a dirty habit." He seemed almost as surprised at this as were the Abyssinian at the Portuguese habit of spitting in the churches.

Throughout the rainy season they were camped all round this very lovely lake, living in plenty, on wheat, honey, butter and flesh supplied in abundance, with barley for the horses and mules, all brought in from the country round; and towards the end of it (on August 29th) the emperor held a great "Gebbur" to commemorate the death of Dom Christovão, at which six thousand poor persons were fed—a feudal practice which obtains in Abyssinia to-day.

Then, after the national feast of Maskal, the emperor started on a great march eastwards, setting out on October 8th towards a "country on the skirts of the sea called Jartafa where there were moors whom he wished to expel."

It must have been almost a migration, for Castanhoso says that were 100,000 souls of which 22,000 only were troops the rest being camp followers and women.

"Omitting cultivators all other ranks of people from nobles to paupers are at court with their women, for the people find more to eat there than anywhere else in the kingdom, because the

Preste is always on the march in the summer, and everything is free where he goes."

From everyone's point of view except that of the said unhappy cultivators, this must have been an easy and pleasant form of existence; but the "cultivators" must have been glad when the king's camp moved on, for its presence must have been rather worse than that of an invading army.

This vast assemblage travelled by two separate routes—for obvious reasons; and in the course of this march passed the rock churches of Lalibala which have already been described by Alvarez.

Soon after this they reached Jataarfa (wherever this may be, for it is impossible to trace it on any map, new or old), and the emperor set about the subjugation of the district, which appears to have taken him until Christmas, which he spent there.

And then Castanhoso came to an eminently sensible decision: "As there was nothing to be done in the country, which was quite freed, and I suffered from my wound which would not heal and there was none to cure me, I sought the Prester's permission to go to Massawa to wait for our vessels which were then due."

The emperor was extremely unwilling to let them go, and only agreed after some time and with great reluctance, alleging what was perfectly true but probably only a part of the truth, viz. that he wished to be able to recompense them properly, and that he could not do so at that time when he was so impoverished, "for the

Moors had captured all his treasures and in truth he was but king over a wide territory and over victuals."

However, Castanhoso persisted, and eventually secured leave to go, the king giving him a horse and two very handsome mules from " his stables, a cloak of green velvet with flowers of gold, and twenty ounces of gold."

Fifty of the Portuguese decided to accompany him, greatly to the emperor's distress, for he kept on " saying frequently that it caused him great pain that they wished to go at a time when he could not shew them favour."

Nevertheless he collected chalices, crosses, and silver from the churches, and ornaments and bracelets from his mother, sister and relatives, and gave it to them, " regretting much that he could give no more ; " he did his utmost to make them stay by all sorts of promises of future wealth and preferment ; and when he found that of no avail he said he hoped they would return if on reaching the coast they found that the Viceroy of India had sent someone " to be captain over them all "—shewing clearly enough that discontent at the appointment of Ariaz Diaz to command them was one of the causes of their departure.

So they left the court, taking with them as their leader the banner of the Holy Compassion, and soon after reaching the coast heard the sound of a ship's guns being fired ; to their delight they discovered that these were signals from a Portuguese vessel which had arrived off Massawa.

But their delight was turned to dismay when on hurrying down to the shore they discovered that the vessel was an exceedingly small one, that it was already overcrowded, and that consequently but a single additional man could be taken on board as a messenger.

They all agreed that, in view of Castanhoso's wound, and of the fact that he bore letters from the emperor to the King of Portugal, he should be the one to go; and so on Sunday, February 16th, 1544, two years and eight months after starting on his great adventure, Castanhoso bade farewell to his companions and embarked on the little "foist" that was to carry him home, "leaving my companions very desirous to do the same. They charged me very strongly to tell the Governor how they had remained behind, and to beg him to send shipping for them, with importunity if he made any demur; and should he refuse I must seek it from the King our Lord. I promised to seek it and to labour in it as I could."

It is easy to imagine the feelings with which his comrades watched the vessel hoist her sails, and turning from the shore sail way to that home which they were never to see again; to picture Castanhoso standing on the stern watching his tried friends as "they remained saying a prayer to the crucifix on their banner, and, it concluded, they turned with sobs, and mounting their horses and mules rode inland towards where the Preste was."

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CHAPTER XVII

FROM THE DEFEAT OF THE MOSLEMS TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF ANDREW DE OVIEDO 1543-1557

With the departure of Castanhoso from Abyssinia the most reliable contemporary record of Portuguese activities in Abyssinia comes to an end; there are, however, fortunately other sources—apart from Bermudez's untrustworthy accounts—from which it is possible to obtain a fairly clear idea of the happenings of the next twelve or fifteen years.

During this period (1543-1556) there were no further arrivals from Portugal, and the Portuguese who had remained in Abyssinia—to the number of about 170—fell upon troublous times, largely owing to the arrogant and tactless behaviour of Bermudez.

He had already, as has been seen, before the defeat of Grañ, requested in most dictatorial terms that the king should submit himself to Rome, and should recognise him, Bermudez, as Abuna or head of the Abyssinian Church.

The king had not only emphatically refused

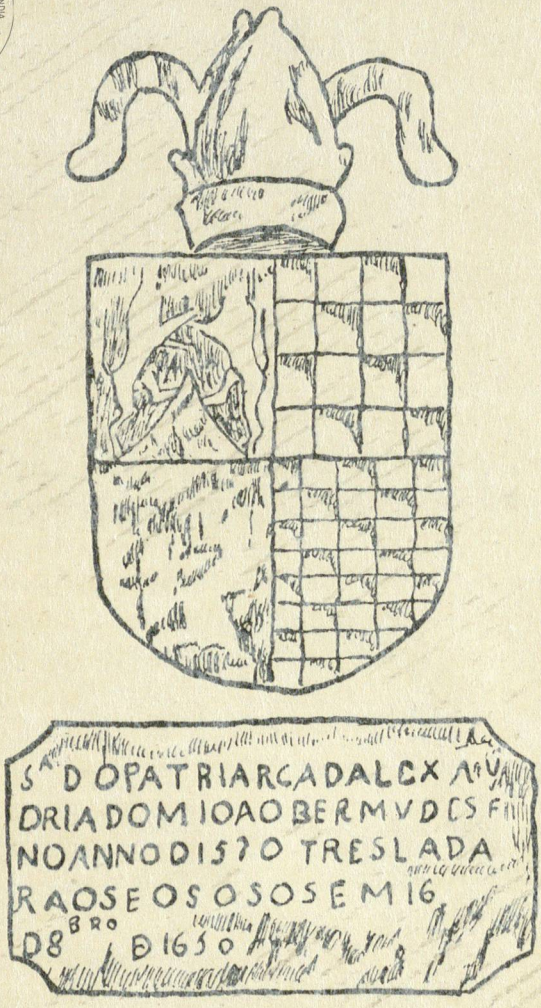
to do so, but had sent to Egypt for an Abuna in accordance with the prescribed custom; and on this becoming known to Bermudez he seems to have had a violent quarrel with the king and to have so far forgotten himself as to call him a liar and a heretic and to tell him he was cursed and excommunicated.

To this the king retorted: "You are not our father but only patriarch of the Franks, and you are an Arian heretic for you have four gods, and you are not in future to call yourself my father; it is you who are excommunicated, not I."

It is not surprising that, after such an exchange of amenities, relations between the king and the Portuguese should have become more and more strained until matters culminated in actual fighting between the Abyssinians and their allies.

Galawdewos managed to adjust matters between them, and then sent the Portuguese off to guard some of the hot and unhealthy frontier districts of the empire in order to get them out of the way; they were driven out of there by the Galla and returned to the King's camp, where a reconciliation took place.

Bermudez, meanwhile had been exiled to Gafat, where his intemperate and outrageous behaviour caused the king to sentence him to be imprisoned for life on an Amba, one of those grim mountain fortresses with which Abyssinia abounds. He was dissuaded from this course by the prayers of the Queen-mother and the Portuguese, and the sentence being commuted to one of exile, Bermudez was allowed to proceed towards



BERMUDEZ' MONUMENT

(*From the edition of his Book published at Lisbon in* 1875.)

Joao Bermudez (Mestre Joam) barber-bleeder, priest, and self-styled Patriarch of Alexandria, Abyssinia and the Sea. He played an important, and later a mischievous, part in the Portuguese-Abyssinian connection, and died at Lisbon in 1570.

the coast to Deboroa, where it was thought he would be out of harm's way; nevertheless, even here he managed to get himself into trouble locally, and was accused of stealing a gold vase from a church!

It was not until March, 1556, that he was able to get away from Massawa on a Portuguese vessel that had brought in two more priests; he returned to Portugal via Goa, having been held up on the way home for a year at St. Helena, and spent the rest of his days in his native land in well-earned rest, from which he was only roused to publish in 1565 his extremely misleading book; in 1570 he died at Lisbon.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Portuguese had begun to settle down permanently in different parts of the country; the king gave them "considerable lands on which they lived plentifully after the country fashion most of them having horses, mules and servants to attend them both in Peace and War."

Recognising his indebtedness to them, Galawdewos appears indeed to have treated them well and generously, as long as they did not pester him to join the Church of Rome or interfere in religious matters. And on their side the Portuguese fought for him stoutly and well in the wars against Moors and Gallas in which he was continuously and successfully engaged until his defeat and death in 1559.

But under the reign of his successor Minas they were very harshly treated, and during the rule of Sarsa Dengel (1563-1595) they were,

though not actually ill-treated, yet neglected and ignored.

So much so that many of them were often hard put to it for the necessaries of life, and many were the appeals for assistance "writ on pieces of parchment and slips of paper" that Tellez says he saw, that were addressed to the Portuguese king.

He says: "However they were never brought away, but that they might not seem to be wholly neglected it was ordered that they should have every year 1200 paradaos of Mamudes being so many pieces of eight, out of the Custom House at Diu, which has been accordingly practised but is a very small support."

It is a pathetic picture; this little party of young and gallant men, marching proudly and joyfully away from their fleet at Massawa on their crusade into Ethiopia; toiling, struggling amid the burning sands and the immense peaks of this wild and savage country; battling against immense hordes of enemies; suffering victory, defeat, and then victory again; finally abandoned amid a savage alien race, suspicious and hostile, thousands of miles from home, condemned to finish their existence there without hope of relief or escape, disappearing as a separate body, their credit entirely destroyed as a result of the intrigues and discreditable behaviour of the priests who followed them and gave them such false guidance.

The third phase of Portuguese activities in Ethiopia—from 1550 onwards—was almost

entirely ecclesiastical and although political support was afforded by the kings of Portugal, and ships were provided by them and on their instructions by successive viceroys of India in which priests and their following were carried to Africa, yet the missionaries when landed were left to their own devices, and in spite of their requests no further military forces were despatched to assist in the conversion of the Abyssinians.

Indeed, such requests must have caused some surprise in Lisbon, for the original connection of Portugal and Abyssinia had arisen from the idea of a combination of Christian forces against the spreading power of Islam; and after sending a diplomatic mission to endeavour to effect an alliance with Abyssinia, and a military mission to assist that country in war, to be asked to send troops to convert it by force of arms from one form of Christianity to another, was obviously too large a pill for the Portuguese monarch to swallow.

Nevertheless, for over eighty years the Portuguese and the Roman Church persisted in their efforts to convert the stubborn people of Ethiopia to accept the doctrines of Roman Catholicism, and whatever may be said of the methods adopted it would be impossible to deny the remarkable courage shown by the missionaries in circumstances of danger, trials, suffering and death.

They almost succeeded in their task; after sixty years of work they obtained a dominating position in the country owing to their success in

securing the conversion of King Susenyos in 1622, and their sway lasted for some six years. But in 1628 it reached its maximum point and, from then onwards, began to decline until five years later the Jesuits were expelled from the country, bag and baggage, and the whole of their work fell to the ground.

The causes of this failure were to be found partly in the nature of the Abyssinian people, their intense attachment to their own form of Christianity, and their dislike and suspicion of foreign interference and domination; and partly in the actions of the Portuguese themselves.

Many striking examples of the arrogance and intolerance of both soldiers and missionaries are found in the Portuguese records, and the two following extracts from Tellez himself are some indication of the causes of the Portuguese-cum-Jesuit failure.

"We see here as was observed before that the Abyssinians are not altogether to blame being much provoked by the pride and intolerable crimes of those who pretended to defend them, so that perhaps they knew not whether the Moors were worse enemies than those auxiliaries."

"It cannot but be observed here that the insolence of the Portuguese above hinted at and now these demands of men to convert Ethiopia by force, together with the demand of one-third part of the Abyssinian empire for the assistance given against the Moors; these things with many other circumstances of the same nature must of necessity give the Ethiopians an aversion to the

scant orders that their journey was to be facilitated in every way.

A delightfully naive account of their reception is contained in a letter from Rodriquez dated 13th September, 1556. King Galawdewos, who was still on the throne, had evidently expected a missive of a very different character from his "cousin of Portugal" than the one which the worthy missionaries brought to him and which was read aloud at court; and the news that a party of high dignitaries of the Church were about to descend on him with a view to converting him and his people to Rome annoyed him so intensely that "he looked much out of countenance and was so disordered that when we spoke to him he answered nothing to the purpose, and so we took our leave, and . . . he went away to visit a Grandmother of his eight or ten days off leaving us in an open field wholly unprovided for."

By way of mending matters tactfully, the worthy priests employed their enforced leisure of a month in compiling a memorandum to present to the king on his return—"a treatise of the Ethiopian errors, and the infallibility of our holy faith," together with a positive request that "he would submit himself to the See of Rome."

They received scant satisfaction—the king let it be known that "he had no occasion for the Fathers; he had learned men enough of his own—and would not submit to the See of Rome;" other great chiefs declared that they would rather

be subject to the Moors; and as a sort of counter-blast to their own literary efforts the priests were presented with a book elegantly entitled *The Adultery of the Francs*, composed by the "Schismaticks of Alexandria."

When the missioners at length saw the king again he refused to listen to them; the Abuna excommunicated anyone who should read the Treatise they had written, and the king categorically refused all their requests.

Later on, however, after some further months' delay, he so far relented as to say he would receive the Fathers that the King of Portugal was sending him, and would listen to what they had to say; perforce content with this grudging concession, Rodriquez hastened back to the coast, where he found the disgraced and exiled Bermudez, and with him embarked in April 1556 for Goa, which he reached in May of that year.

He waited there until September, when Barreto and Oviedo arrived from Lisbon, and then he made them his report, "a far different account of that country than they expected." So disturbed were they by it indeed that it was considered unwise to hazard the person of the Patriarch Barreto on the Abyssinian venture, and Oviedo was despatched in his place; accompanied by five other priests, Emanuel and Antonio Fernandez, Francisco Lopez, Gonzalo Cordozo and Andrew Gualdames, that prelate arrived at Arkiko in March 1557.

So started the first "permanent" mission for the conversion of Abyssinia—a mission that

lasted some twenty years without achieving any success. Two members of the party were murdered, and the four others died in the country as the result of the hardship and tribulation they encountered.

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CHAPTER XVIII

ANDREW DE OVIEDO'S PATRIARCHATE 1557-1577

Bishop Oviedo and his five colleagues reached Arkiko in March 1557, and followed the usual route into Ethiopia via Debaroa, at which town he was met and well received by the same Bahrnagast (Governor of the Coast) Isaac who had welcomed Dom Christovão da Gama sixteen years before.

They had been obliged to leave Massawa in a hurry owing to the arrival there of a Turkish expedition "designed to conquer Ethiopia," and for the next few years this, the last access to Abyssinia, was held by the Moslems, so that it was not for five years that Oviedo could get a letter sent out of the country, although he made many attempts.

His own story of their reception by the king was contained in a letter written in 1562. In it he says: "We went immediately where he with his mother and brothers was looking out from a high place, and although it was not usual would have all ride into the first court, he seeing all from another within. After staying there a while he commanded us to alight and go into the

second court . . . and made us stand there awhile again whilst he looked at us through silk hangings."

Apparently the inspection proved satisfactory, for they were brought into the king's presence and received "very courteously and lovingly," until the usual letters were read demanding his submission to Rome, when not unnaturally "he presently began to look displeased being far from any thoughts of a reconciliation with Rome."

There followed the usual series of interminable arguments between the Portuguese and the Abyssinians on the subject of the merits of their respective faiths, especially on the points of dogma of the dual nature of Christ, the observance of the Sabbath and other minor matters.

The king, realising that his priests were no match for their Jesuit antagonists, took the discussion into his own hands, and so ably did he argue that the Portuguese themselves admitted "he sometimes set the Bishop hard."

Then the discussions took written form, and Galawdewos produced a masterly document which has been preserved to us under the title of his *Confession of Faith*, accompanied by a final declaration "never to submit to the See of Rome."

Oviedo seems now to have lost all patience; he withdrew from the court at the end of 1558, and in the following February issued a tactless and offensive "circular letter" advising the Portuguese and other Catholics to have nothing to do with the "Schismaticks," exhorting the Abyssinians to forsake their religion and condemning them as "refractory and obstinate

against the Church," and advising them not to obey their king.

It was perhaps fortunate for Oviedo and his fellow missionaries that Galawdewos had his hands too full with other and more pressing matters to be able to waste time on his unmannerly guest.

He had enjoyed throughout his reign of nineteen years an uninterrupted series of victories against his foes—Gallas, Adals, and other Moslem enemies, and so when now he was challenged by his old antagonist, Nur, King of Adal, who had invaded the kingdom, he hastened south to meet him, scarcely waiting to gather a scanty force quite inadequate for the purpose, so certain was he of victory.

Nur was a nephew of the great Ahmed Grañ, and according to Moslem custom had for long wished to marry his uncle's widow, Del Wanbara. This lady, however, had never forgiven Galawdewos for being instrumental in the defeat and death of Grañ in 1543, and she informed Nur that she would not consent to marry him until he should bring her the head of Galawdewos.

This constancy in revenge—lasting some sixteen years—was the more remarkable, if true, as it is quite at variance with the character which has been given her by Moslems and Christians alike.

Del Wanbara, daughter and wife of warriors, was the third of the remarkable women who played a great part in the story of this period, and sensibly affected it.

Her father was the great Moslem warrior Mahfuz, who had been defeated in battle by Lebna

Dengel (then sixteen years old) in July, 1517, and slain in the course of the fight in single combat by Gabriel Andrea, a monk who had had his tongue cut out.

She had married Ahmed Grañ in 1530, and was his constant companion during his thirteen years of warfare; insisting on accompanying him on his raids into Abyssinia, even when the Moslem troops murmured against this unusual departure and tried to prevent her.

Stout hearted as she was, her counsel was always on the side of mercy—even the Abyssinian chronicles admit this—and it was owing to her efforts that Minas, Lebna Dengel's son, captured in battle by Grañ in 1539, was not emasculated. This effort of hers was to prove providential for her, for when her own son was captured in 1543 in the battle in which Grañ was defeated, it thus became possible to effect an exchange of the two young men—a course which would have been impossible had Minas been emasculated, for the Abyssinians would not then have ransomed him, as no mutilated prince may ascend the throne.

Inspired, as the chronicles report, by this lady, Nur invaded Abyssinia at the head of a large force—a far more formidable array than that at the disposal of Galawdewos.

Nur sent him an insulting message to the effect that "although Grañ was dead, there still remained a Governor of Zeila whose family was chosen as a particular instrument for shedding the blood of Abyssinian princes," and added that he was coming to meet him.

Galawdewos seems to have been warned by a company of monks, and by his own officers, and even (according to the Abyssinian chronicles) by a favourite concubine " whom he loved much on account of the beauty of her countenance and whom he had taken by force from her husband who was a priest," of the folly of engaging battle on such unequal terms.

But he persisted in his determination, and for the first and last time in his life suffered defeat. He was killed fighting desperately, and with him all the Portuguese soldiers who had accompanied him into battle, a double blow for the Jesuits, for his successor was to meet them with an intolerance as bitter as their own.

That they appreciated his clemency and kindness is proved by their own writings, in which they say: " He always behaved himself civilly towards the Bishop (Oviedo) and whilst he lived none durst show him disrespect; besides that he furnished us plentifully because he was naturally generous especially where the King of Portugal was concerned as owing an obligation to him. He was so good natured and so much concerned for the sufferings he apprehended the Bishop might be exposed to, that going to engage the Moors by whom he was killed he said: *Alas poor Bishop what will become of him if I die?* This Emperor Claudius was so well qualified, bating his obstinacy in religion, that I am positively of opinion there was not a wiser man in the Empire or so fit to govern. He . . . used so much courtesy towards the Bishop that in the

height of his obduracy we still hoped for some good of him."

They were now to deal with a very different sovereign. Galawdewos had left no son, and the succession devolved on his brother Minas, who had been taken prisoner by Grañ's forces towards the end of his ill-fated father's reign, and had suffered nearly eight years' captivity in Arabia.

He owed his return to the determined efforts of his mother, Queen Sabela Wangel, and the no less resolute behaviour of Ahmed Grañ's widow, whose son Muhamed had, as already stated, also been taken prisoner in 1543 at the great battle where Grañ was defeated and killed.

The Moslems were by no means anxious to let Minas go, as he was a strong and able man, and they probably felt—and with justice as after-events proved—that he was likely to prove a thorn in their flesh.

But, as Bruce observes, "Del Wumbara thought that having lost her husband to be deprived of her son likewise was more than fell to her share in the common cause," and she wrought powerfully with her own people, while Galawdewos on his side, prompted by his mother, swore that he would deliver Grañ's son to the Portuguese if Minas were not released.

So in 1547, on the payment of 4,000 ounces of gold by the Abyssinians, the exchange was effected, and twelve years later Minas came to the throne. He is thus described by the missionaries: "He was of a perverse and cruel disposition, whereof he had given some instances

in his infancy, and having been prisoner and bred up among Moors and Turks, he had their native insolence instilled into him with their falsehood and fierceness."

As a matter of fact this statement is probably quite untrue. Minas was certainly of a violent disposition, but he appears from contemporary accounts to have been an extremely conscientious and patriotic ruler, very sober and frugal in his habits, and a hard worker.

It is probable that Oviedo's behaviour was responsible for all the trouble that now fell on him and his compatriots.

On his accession Oviedo and his colleagues returned to court and offered their congratulations to the king, who received them with sufficient courtesy, but forbade them to preach and to continue to carry on their efforts of converting the people.

Oviedo paid no attention to these instructions, but went on with his crusade. Minas thereupon sent for him and, finding him utterly recalcitrant and defiant, lost his temper, fell upon him, and tearing off his clothes thrashed him with his own hands—indeed, he drew his sword and would probably have put an end to him then and there had it not been for the efforts and entreaties of the Queen-mother and some of the courtiers.

Rigorous edicts were now promulgated against the Portuguese. Under Galawdewos, Abyssinians and Roman Catholics had frequented each other's churches, had intermarried, and had indeed been married indiscriminately by priests of either denomination. Now Abyssinians were forbidden

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ADOWA

Near here was the principal settlement of the Portuguese Jesuits, known as Maigoga (the noise of waters), later renamed by them Fremona in honour of Frumentius, who converted the Abyssinians to Christianity circa 330 A.D.

under pain of death to enter the Roman Catholic churches; converts were whipped, imprisoned and even executed; lands which had been given to the Portuguese were taken away; and generally they were made to realise that they had exchanged the whips of Galawdewos for the scorpions of Minas.

The Jesuits were banished to what they at the time described with some exaggeration as a "lonely and barren mountain," and as the place later on became their headquarters and principal residence, it may be of interest to describe it here. It was known as Maigoga (The noise of waters), being a hill situated at the confluence of two streams between Axum and Adowa.

Oviedo changed the name to Fremona in honour of Frumentius, the converter of Abyssinia in the XIVth century, and here he spent the rest of his life. Later on—probably after 1600—succeeding Jesuits erected a very strong residence, almost a fortress indeed, "enclosed by 7 or 8 bastions with lofty curtins between them," built of stone cemented by "red clay so glutinous as to save lime." Subsequent emperors of Abyssinia added large territories, "nine pieces of land in perpetuity, and each one might have passed for a good and rich county."

Wylde describes the ruins of the monastery which he visited in 1896-7, and it was close by these that the Emperor Menelik and his queen camped in 1896, the night before the battle of Adowa, when once again three centuries later the Abyssinians came into conflict with the forces of a Christian power.

Oviedo and his priests were given strict instructions not to leave Fremona; but the fiery zeal of Oviedo would not allow him to accept his sentence with the meekness supposedly characteristic of his cloth, and he joined forces with Isaac, the Bahrnagast, who had risen in rebellion against the king, and drew a number of the Portuguese settlers with him as well as his fellow priests. Indeed, it is more than probable that Oviedo was to a large extent responsible for the rebellion of Isaac, whose object was to substitute Minas's nephew Taskars for his uncle on the throne of Abyssinia. The rebels were defeated; Taskars was captured and thrown from the rock precipice of Lamalmon; Isaac, withdrawing to the north, made friends with the Turkish and other Moslem enemies of his country; and—a strange fate for a Christian missionary—Oviedo and his priests were compelled to remain with the insurgents and Moslems until Minas's death in 1563.

Their lot seems to have been a fairly hard one according to the letter already referred to as having been despatched in 1562. "We had been before robbed four times and were now reduced to extremity. . . . Your Reverence may guess what a miserable condition we are in being forty in family and forced to relieve when we are able the Portuguese widows and orphans and nobody to ask an alms of; for the Portugueses have more occasion to beg than give and the natives are more inclined to take and steal than to part with anything. For our table we have

scarce a bellyful of parched barley. The Bishop is not fit to be seen. . . ."

And while the unfortunate Jesuits were living in these lamentable conditions, cut off from all communication with the outside world, their colleagues in India, and especially the patriarch Nuñez Barreto, were no less distressed at receiving no news from them. They eventually persuaded the Viceroy to fit out an expedition of three ships to go to the relief of the Portuguese in Abyssinia in 1560, but the little fleet was defeated and almost destroyed by Turkish galleys; some priests that were on board one of the captured ships being forced to work as galley slaves for the Turks for two years before being ransomed.

Nuñez de Barreto, who had remained at Goa all this time, died there in 1562, and the Patriarchate of Abyssinia, therefore, automatically devolved upon Oviedo.

His new dignity, however, helped him little. King Minas had died in 1563, and had been succeeded by Sartsa Dengel, who though not actually oppressive towards the Portuguese priests, would not allow them to indulge in any proselytising activities or to appear at court.

Oviedo made various appeals to Lisbon and Rome for assistance, especially pressing for an armed force of five hundred or six hundred Portuguese, "who might easily make themselves masters of the sea ports, rescue the other Portuguese, and compel the Ethiopians to submit to the See of Rome."

However, Cardinal Prince Henry, who acted

as Regent during the minority of King Sebastian of Portugal, fanatical Jesuit though he was, saw clearly enough the impossibility of securing any useful results by the methods advocated by Oviedo, and doubtless realised also the unsuitability of that prelate for operations in Abyssinia. So he induced the newly enthroned Pope, Pius V, to grant leave to Oviedo to leave Ethiopia and "to proceed to Japan or China, or somewhere else, where they might do more good and make less noise."

But Oviedo, nothing daunted by his failures and hardships, was by no means minded to go, and put in a powerful plea to be allowed to stay. So although his renewed request for an armed force to assist in compulsory conversion was not complied with, and indeed he was given no further external assistance of any sort or kind, yet he was allowed to remain on, and he dragged out a solitary and poverty-stricken existence at Fremona until his death there in 1577.

While it is impossible to sympathise with Oviedo's methods, his intolerant and bigoted zeal, his lack of tact, and his militant activities, it is yet necessary to pay a tribute of admiration to his courage and constancy. At Fremona "his palace was a thatched hut, his diet a thin cake of tef . . . his other dainties were cabbage or linseed without any other seasoning but salt and water; and even these he was to sow and bring up himself. . . . In the midst of his sufferings he spared no labour attending the poor of all sorts which was the occasion of converting many

schismaticks. . . . His poverty was such that he was reduced to tear the first white page out of his Breviary to write a letter on. Another he afterwards wrote to the Pope and wanting even such a leaf he cut off the margins of his breviary and sewed them together to write it on."

Of the five Fathers who had accompanied him, two had already been murdered; the other three survived him, but all died at Fremona. They were all animated by the zeal of their leader, and toiled on indefatigably in their hopeless cause. One of them, F. Antonio Fernandez, when over seventy years old, travelled one hundred leagues to attend a dying Portuguese, and worn out by his efforts himself died on his return to Fremona. The last survivor was Father Francis Lopez, who died in 1597 at the age of eighty.

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CHAPTER XIX

PAEZ' FIRST UNSUCCESSFUL JOURNEY, AND DA SYLVA'S MISSION 1577-1603

An interval of some five and twenty years elapsed between the death of Oviedo and the arrival in Abyssinia of his successor, Petez Paez, the most remarkable of all the Jesuits who laboured so zealously for the conversion of Ethiopia.

King Sebastian had been killed fighting the Moors in Morocco; the Cardinal, his uncle, who succeeded him as Henry I (1578-1580), was old and almost insane, and then the rulership of Portugal passed to Philip II of Spain, who became Philip I of Portugal.

These happenings gave Abyssinia a little peace, but there was no indication of any real lack of enthusiasm or interest on the part of Portugal or Rome, and the latter part of the quarter century was occupied with the desperate efforts of Paez—lasting seven years—to get into Abyssinia, a record of adventure and hardship that rivals any of the old-time tales of exploration.

Philip I of Portugal (Philip II of Spain) lost little time after his accession in dealing with Abyssinian affairs, and he wrote to Dom Duarte de Menzes, Viceroy of India, charging him "to spare no labour or cost for the promoting of the conversion of Ethiopia."

The Viceroy died before receiving the letter, and there was some delay before his successor, Emanuel de Sousa Coutinho, was able to deal with the matter. Coutinho eventually got into touch with the Provincial of the Jesuits, and as a result two priests were appointed in 1587 to "carry on the good work," Father Peter Pays or Paez and Father Anthony de Monserrate.

But the Viceroy does not seem to have taken advantage of his authority "to spare no cost," for they were not despatched in warships or with any escort, but in the vessel of an Indian trader plying to Massawa, disguised as Armenians.

It is an eloquent tribute to the command that the Turks had obtained at that time of the Red Sea and the northerly part of the Indian Ocean, that the authorities had the greatest difficulty in inducing any trading ships to carry Paez and his colleague at almost any price, so terrified were the merchants that the fact they were carrying white men would be betrayed to the Turks, and that consequently their vessels would be marked out and captured, and they themselves carried off into slavery as a penalty.

Paez and Monserrate got ship from Goa to Diu, into which city they were smuggled, disguised as Armenians, and had to remain there a long

while, during which, the Viceroy's officers tried to means to forward them on their journey.

So great were the difficulties, however, that they were at length induced to accept the offer of an Armenian to convey them to Basra, thence by land northward to Aleppo, from there westwards to Cairo and finally south by caravan into Abyssinia !

That they should even have contemplated what was then such a long, arduous and roundabout journey is an indication of the straits to which they were reduced.

Though " this was a tedious way about yet their earnestness made it appear easy," and they actually embarked on board the Armenian's ship and started off. At Mascate (Muscat) where they put in for water they were, however, persuaded to travel on a Moor's ship bound for Zeila, and while this was being got ready they stayed at Ormuz in the monastery of the Augustine Friars until December 26th, 1588, when they started off again.

Now trouble came upon them thick and fast ; they ran into a violent storm, their ship was disabled, the rudder broken off, and they were forced to land on one of the Kuria Muria Islands off the south coast of Arabia.

Paez did not think much of the population. He described them as " a poor miserable people covering their houses with the weeds the sea casts upon the shore and feeding on fish whereof they have plenty but want wood to dress it and therefore eat it raw."

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They managed to obtain some sort of small boat among the islands and spent some time fitting it out. Then they set sail for Zeila.

But the Turks had heard of their presence—the Moorish skipper had been indiscreet enough to talk of his passengers to a compatriot who had betrayed him—and one morning as they were coasting along the inhospitable shores of Hadramaut, "struggling with contrary winds," two light Turkish galleys swept down on them and carried them prisoners to the shore, to Dhofar, according to Paez.

What happened to the Moorish captain and his crew is not known, but Paez and Monserrate were "stripped almost naked, and shut up in an old house of mud walls where they had little to eat by day, and abundance of vermin to break their rest at night."

The commander of the town or district seem, to have been an official of the "King of Xoel," a tributary tribe or state of the ruler of Yemen and he decided to despatch his prisoners to his overlord.

They were put on a small boat and sailed along the coast for five days, when they set out across the desert, the unhappy priests being made to walk "with much trouble being ill shod," until their captors loaded them on to camels, not out of any kindly feeling for them, but "for the more expedition."

For ten days they travelled across the desert, "the heat excessive, the allowance of bread very small and that of water less because they had none

but what the camels carried" until they reached the town of Tarin, where the kindly hospitable inhabitants crowded in curiosity to see them, "spit on their faces, and had they not been put into a house would have stoned them to death."

After five more days of this exhausting travel they reached Heynan, the capital of King Hunor, and here for a couple of days they were put into a sort of cage on the walls, "where they had trouble enough from the many people that came to see them and could never be satisfied with gazing."

For four weary months they remained in prison here, and it is hardly surprising that they quarrelled with the description 'Felix' as applied to that district of Arabia, Paez remarking that "though that part of Arabia is called the Happy it is to be supposed the ancients gave it the name by the rule of contraries or else through a mistake."

Their lot improved slightly during their stay, but they were soon to have a change for the worse, for the king's overlord, the ruler of Yemen, sent instructions that the prisoners were to be forwarded on to him, "because all Portuguese captives belonged to the Great Turk according to articles agreed on betwixt them."

So they had to set off on another long journey three weeks across the desert during June and July, one stage having to be crossed by four days and nights' continuous travelling without rest, owing to the absence of water.

During this journey they passed through Melquis, where they "saw the ruins of stately

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structures, and stones with ancient inscriptions which the natives themselves could not read, but said there was formerly a very large city, and that the Queen of Sheba had then mighty flocks of cattle;" no doubt the old kingdom of Saba.

Eventually they reached the town of Canaan, sixty leagues from Mocha, and here they were kept in prison for nearly six years, "most barbarously used," in order to extort from them a ransom of 2,500 crowns.

Canaan had formerly been a very large city, the capital of Yemen, "encompassed with strong walls and mighty bulwarks of earth"; it housed at that time about 2,000 families, 500 of them Jews, and Paez found 25 Portuguese and 5 Indian Christians captive there, who "were at such variance among themselves that they were ready to murder one another."

Paez was successful in composing their differences, and for part of the time managed to be allowed to work as a gardener owing to the fact that "for their comfort God ordered it that the Basha who had been one of the Great Turk's gardeners and still loved that art, employed them all to work in his garden."

But later on this privilege was withdrawn; they were used worse than before, and were sent off to Mocha, "to see whether the Indian merchants would purchase them."

As they failed to find a market, the wretched men were sent on board a Turkish vessel and made to toil at the oars as galley slaves; it is extraordinary to realise that they survived this

barbarous treatment for another whole year—they must have been extremely tough men.

But their troubles were now coming to an end. A Syrian youth whom they had befriended had managed to obtain his release from the Turks, and making his way to Goa laid before the Portuguese authorities a full account of the piteous state in which the wretched priests were held. The Viceroy, Dom Mathias d'Abuquerque, was so moved by the recital of their sufferings that he despatched an Indian merchant to Mocha towards the end of 1595 with instructions that the fathers were to be ransomed at any price, and for the sum of five hundred crowns they were purchased from the Turks; though full of courage to the last they "opposed it alleging that money might ransom many more."

They were conveyed to Diu, and thence, after a rest to recover from their terrible sufferings, to Goa where Monserrate died in 1600; and Paez, after an interval, set to work to make plans for a further attempt to get into Abyssinia. It is not to be wondered at that a man of such immense courage and inflexible determination should eventually have succeeded even in such an almost impossible task.

The news of the capture and incarceration in Arabia of Fathers Paez and Monserrate, and of the deaths of the remaining priests who had accompanied Oviedo into Ethiopia had caused considerable consternation among the Jesuits in India. The increasing power of the Turks and Moslems in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean seemed

to make it almost impossible to get white men carried across from India to Africa, and the Indian traders were so much afraid of the "Moors," as they called them, that they raised every possible objection to the Jesuits establishing a mission station at Diu (the principal port for the Red Sea trade) lest by so doing they should "convert the Moors and Gentiles that come to trade thither which would be a hindrance to their dealings."

But the Viceroy and the King of Portugal were entirely under the influence of the Jesuits, and the station was duly established.

Nor was the idea of the conversion of Ethiopia abandoned for a moment, and pending the discovery of a safer method of entry for white men into the country they decided to send in an Indian priest whose colour and language would enable him to pass in disguise when a European could not.

The choice fell upon Father Belchior da Sylva, a Brahman, who is described as "a secular priest, Vicar of the Church of St. Anne in Goa, a man of learning and piety," and in March, 1596,[1] this worthy man sailed from Diu, and arrived safely at Fremona, via Massawa and Debarua, where he was received by the Portuguese with much joy.

Not much is known of his activities, but he remained in the country for some years (probably five to seven) until the arrival of Paez in 1603, leaving for India a year after the latter had relieved him in Abyssinia.

[1] Possibly 1598. There is some confusion in the original records on this point.

CHAPTER XX

PAEZ IN ABYSSINIA

PART I

1603-1609

Paez had been not at all daunted by his extraordinarily hazardous experiences on his first attempt to reach Ethiopia, and after some six years in India he determined to make another effort; persuaded the Viceroy to give him a couple of ships to go to Diu, and disguised as an Armenian merchant set sail from Diu once more on March 22nd, 1603, after his vessel had been "much shattered and unmasted" on the preliminary journey between Goa and Diu.

As he had become a master of the Arabic language during his long captivity, he experienced comparatively little difficulty on this venture, and passing through Massawa and Debaroa reached Fremona on May 15th, whence a messenger was at once sent to the Emperor of Abyssinia to announce his arrival.

The throne of Abyssinia was at that moment the subject of intrigue and dispute between three rival claimants. Sarsa Dengel, the enemy of the

Portuguese, had died in 1595, leaving no legal heirs, but an illegitimate son, Jacob, aged seven years, whom the more powerful chiefs raised to the throne, setting aside the much stronger claims of the late king's nephew Za Dengel, and of Socinios (or Susenyos), the great-grandson of King Lebna Dengel.

Their motives were obvious. Jacob was a child, and the others were grown and apparently fairly strong-minded men. So lest they should cause any trouble Za Dengel was imprisoned, and Socinios was chased out of the country to a remote mountain fastness in the north.

Jacob proved to be a fairly amenable sovereign until he reached the age of fourteen years, when he began to manifest unmistakable signs of wishing to be king in fact as well as in name; and as this did not please the empress and her advisers, they recalled Za Dengel to the throne and imprisoned Jacob in his turn. Jacob had been emperor when Paez arrived at Fremona, but as he lost the throne within the next few months it was Za Dengel with whom the Portuguese had to deal.

This was fortunate for them, for he is said to have been "very affable and curious and inclined to hear anything that was new to him."

His interest had been excited by the reports of Paez's travels, learning and versatility, and of the remarkable results he had achieved during the year of his stay at Fremona in instructing children to "discourse by way of dialogue of all the Mysteries of religion." This Paez had

succeeded in doing by having the catechism translated into Ethiopic and making the children learn it by heart, so that " the fame of it reached the Court and the scholars were so highly commended that their master could not but partake of their praises."

Za Dengel waited only to complete a victorious compaign against the Galla, and then immediately sent for Paez to come to him in his camp at Dancaz near Lake Tana, where he received him well, and listened with great interest to all that he had to say.

The emperor—a young man about twenty-six years old—must have been immensely impressed with this exceptionally able man, who interested him with accounts of his extensive journeys, his hardships in Arabia, and his wealth of general knowledge; impressed him with his sincerity, and pleased him by his humour and his tact.

Paez had moreover acquired a real mastery of the Ethiopic or Gîz language, a remarkable feat when one considers the shortness of the time he had been in the country and the difficulty of that tongue. Thanks to this he was able not only to say Mass before the king in a language the monarch well understood, but also to preach an eloquent series of sermons, expound his doctrines, and vanquish the arguments of the ignorant Abyssinian priests with the greatest ease.

So great was the effect produced on the king that he is reported to have been desirous of embracing the faith of Rome, and of trying to force it on his subjects at once; he was only

dissuaded by Paez himself who, with rare tact, "advised him to proceed more gently," realising the dangers that were likely to arise from the hostility of the ignorant priests and the discontented chieftains.

Za Dengel nevertheless shewed his mind clearly in an interesting letter to the Pope in which, without "definitely submitting to the See of Rome," he asked for "Fathers to instruct us that we may be all one heart and one body and establish the faith of Christ which was lost among the Gentiles."

He also asked that soldiers should be sent to assist him against the Galla; and in order that his friendship with the King of Portugal "may be the more lasting" he told the Pope that "we desire him (i.e. the King of Portugal) to send us his daughter to be married to our son." (The son in question was seven years old, and the daughter of the King of Spain and Portugal was Anne of Austria!)

He concluded his letter by observing "we write this briefly to your Holiness as knowing you will fulfil our desires. . . . Few words to the wise."

This breezy and colloquial effusion, with one in the same strain addressed to the King of Portugal, was given to Paez to despatch. But the King's impatience would not allow him to await a reply, and against the advice of Paez he insisted on issuing decrees concerning the observance of the Sabbath and other disputed points of doctrine, with the inevitable result that the more tactful priest had foreseen.

Fomented by the native Church, insurrection broke out on all sides; the Abuna excommunicated the king as having betrayed the national religion, and in spite of the aid of two hundred Portuguese the king was defeated and slain by the insurgents.

He had desired the presence of Paez at the battle in order to obtain the benefit of his advice and blessing, but that astute person not being at all desirous of embroiling himself with the various factions in the country, had departed to the northern mountains where he awaited developments.

The successful insurgents recalled Jacob from banishment to resume the throne whence he had been driven a year previously, but he had barely time to assume the purple before being attacked and in his turn defeated by his cousin Socinios or Susenyos, both Jacob and the Abyssinian Abuna (Archbishop) Peter being killed in the battle.

This typically Abyssinian method of changing the succession did not, however, affect Paez's successful progress, for Socinios was as interested in the foreign visitors as Za Dengel had been.

He sent for them to come to his court, which was at that time north of Lake Tana, and as the rains were then in full force and made travelling across country difficult, if not impossible, the king instructed them to cross, or rather coast round, the lake by boat.

The craft in which the journey was made do not appear to have filled Paez with any enthusiasm. He describes them as "a sort of vessels they call Tancoas . . . not made of wood but of a sort

of rushes they call tabua, whereof there is great plenty in this Lake, each of which is as thick as a man's arm and a fathom in length."

He remarks wonderingly that "they are satisfied with these vessels," and adds ambiguously "they are as handsome as those who make them."

In them, Paez and his colleague "coasted along not daring to venture out because the least motion of the water oversets them, as do the river horses to devour those that are in them; and in striking over a small creek they were in great danger from one of these monsters making at them, but escaped almost miraculously to the other shore where that creature left them for want of water."

After which account of this escape from an over-sensitive hippopotamus, it is satisfactory to be solemnly assured that "it is most certain there are no Tritons nor Sirens in this Lake."

The boats so disparagingly referred to by the Fathers are in fact in use in Abyssinia to-day, not only on Lake Tana where they found them, but also on Lake Zwai, one of the great chain of lakes in the south of Abyssinia; the reed of which they are made is a sort of papyrus.

An amusing tale is told by an Abyssinian chronicler of the use of these reeds for ship-building purposes. A party of men and horses had to be taken across Lake Tana to the Island of Dak, and a large raft of reeds was constructed for the purpose. When about halfway over the raft began to sink by one end; the Abyssinians were intensely alarmed and greatly puzzled by

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the phenomenon, and, not being swimmers, would probably have been drowned in the lake had they not discovered in time the cause of the impending disaster—their horses were eating one end of the raft!

Paez arrived safely at the king's camp and was well received, but he was not at all impressed by the state in which the emperor lived, and least of all by his feeding arrangements, the "meanness of the prince's table" astonishing him.

He would probably have been still more astonished had he known that the method of eating then practised would continue right up to the present day, for his description might almost have been written of palace banquets at Addis Ababa in the twentieth century.

"When dinner time came a curtain was drawn betwixt the Emperor's table and that for the Fathers, an inviolable custom in Ethiopia where no man sees the Emperor at dinner. . . . Then women bring in *Macobos* which are like large table baskets, and very lofty because covered with high lids like caps, the whole made of straw or rushes of several colours. In these *Macobos* were 20 or 30 *Apas*, that is thin cakes . . . made of their grain called *Tef* . . . very large and thin at least half a yard diameter. . . . And it is to be observed that those very *Apas* which serve instead of napkins and dishes are also part of the food. When the *broundo* which is the raw beef, being the greatest dainty at the table, is brought in, they lay it on the *Apas* and the Emperor of Ethiopia himself takes out a little knife he carries

about him and cuts the beef or has it cut by his pages. . . . The same pages put the morsels into his mouth which custom is observed not only by the Emperors but by all the gentlemen of Ethiopia who look upon it as too much trouble to feed themselves. Nor is this the worst for these morsels are generally of the soft of the bread, or of the *Apas* crumbled in the hand wetted in several liquors and so moulded over as if they were kneading it, and sometimes these morsels are so big that they can scarce be put in the mouth, and yet they thrust them in, much as we cram chicken."

Up to a few years ago the present Empress of Abyssinia was fed by her slaves, and at great banquets she eats behind green silk curtains, while raw meat is still the great national delicacy for rich and poor, and the great raw meat banquets or *Geburs* are still held at the palace, though Europeans are no longer privileged to attend them.

A detailed description of one of these feasts witnessed by the author is given in his book, *Unconquered Abyssinia as it is To-day*.

Shortly after Paez's arrival the king had to depart to deal with an insurrection provoked by a pretender to the throne, and as this promised to be a fairly lengthy operation he thought it well to consolidate his position meanwhile, by being crowned at the holy city of Axum in the manner prescribed for Ethiopian monarchs since time immemorial.

The coronation took place on March 23rd, 1609, 25,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry being mustered for the occasion, and fortunately Paez

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gives a very interesting account of the ancient ceremony, with its Jewish rites.

"The Emperor," he says, "had on a fine vest of crimson damask, and over it a Turkish robe of brocade like the ancient Roman gowns, the sleeves straight but so long that they hung down to the ground . . . girt with a broad girdle all of pieces of gold curiously wrought, and on his neck a thick chain of gold which went several times about hanging down on his breast and the ends of it falling deep behind, all which he being a handsome man, became him very well."

"About two musket shots from the church of Axum is a very large stone all covered with unknown characters. . . ."

"There the Emperor alighted with all his court. The ground was covered with large and rich carpets, the great men drew up on both sides. The maidens of Sion stopped the way crossing it with a silk line up to which the Emperor went three times and being asked by the Maidens who he was, the first and second time answered, 'I am King of Israel.' The maidens replyed, 'Then you are not our King.' . . . Being asked the third time who he was, he answered, 'I am King of Sion,' and drawing the sword he wore he cut the line, the maids then saying, 'You are truly our King of Sion.' and then the air resounded with acclamations of joy, vollies of small shot, and the voice of trumpets, kettledrums, waights and all other musical instruments."

Many other ceremonies followed, the actual coronation being performed by the recently arrived

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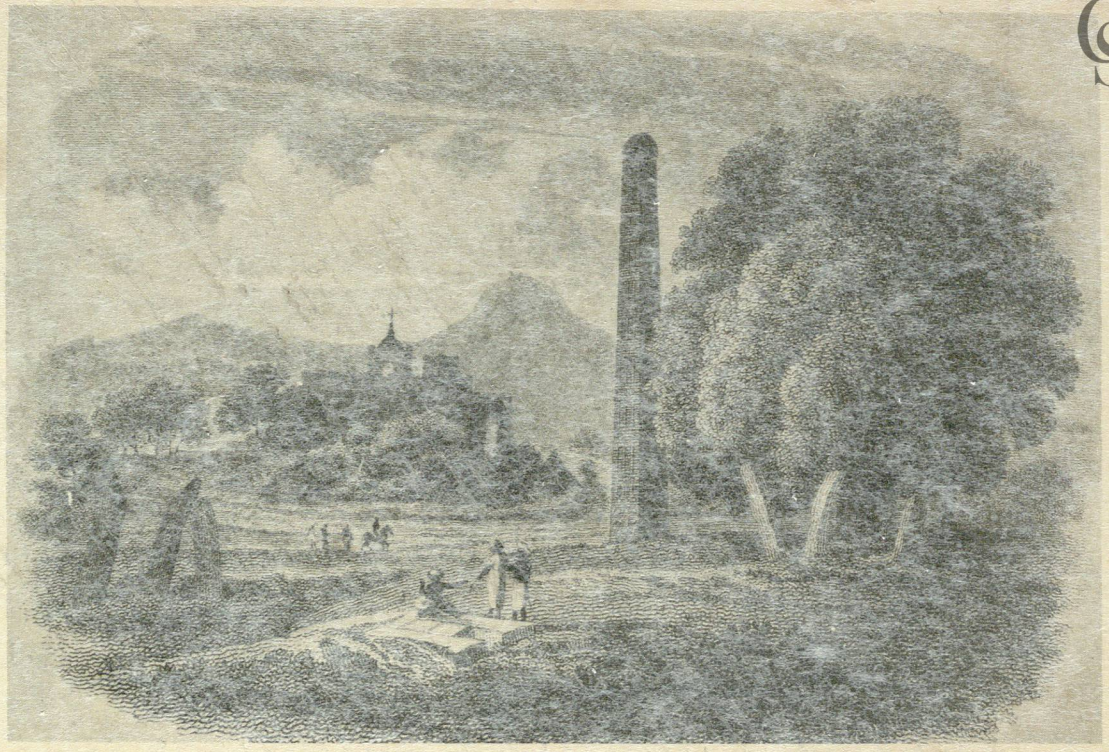

AXUM

The seat of the old Axumite dynasty in the first centuries A.D.; afterwards the royal and sacred town of the Abyssinian for many hundred years.

Abuna Simon, who had taken the place of his predecessor, Peter, killed in battle in 1604, an interesting point as showing that the line of Abyssinian Abunas was being continued in spite of the Portuguese claims to the Abunaship in the person of Bermudez, and to the overlordship of the Abyssinian Church through their own patriarchs.

CHAPTER XXI

PAEZ IN ABYSSINIA

PART II

1610-1622

FERNANDEZ' JOURNEY

During the next four or five years (1610-1614) Paez made steady if slow progress towards his object. He had abandoned Fremona, where he had built a fine church, and established himself on the beautiful promontory of Gorgora, a rocky wooded little peninsula that projects into Lake Tana on the north side.

The position had the advantage of being near the emperor's camp, and thus facilitated the eternal theological conferences and arguments and discussions in which the Abyssinians have always delighted, but in which they were no match for their most recent antagonists.

Paez tells us that " the Emperor was a judicious man and saw into the truth of the Catholic doctrine ," but he was also a cautious man and had no intention of imitating Za Dengel's disastrous precipitancy, so he refrained from committing himself publicly to the new faith, while

secretly encouraging it in many ways, and writing to the King of Portugal for troops to enable him to convert the country forcibly.

He gave land and other presents to the Jesuits, who certainly made the most of their opportunities. They found a quarry of white stone near Gorgora, and with this material they built a very beautiful church there, the second one to be erected in Abyssinia; the third was soon afterwards built at Collela in Gojam by order of the Viceroy, Ras Sela Cristos, the emperor's brother who had become an open convert to Roman Catholicism together with many of his officers.

This prince was the most ardent and intemperate supporter of the Jesuits throughout the whole of the period of their activities in Abyssinia; he carried on a relentless persecution of those of his fellow countrymen who would not embrace the new faith, and shared their downfall when they were driven out of the country, being imprisoned in chains on an Amba in Simien, and eventually put to death.

As has been already stated, the emperor was exceedingly anxious to obtain a contingent of Portuguese troops, partly to enable him to deal with the Galla and partly so to strengthen his position as to make it possible for him to declare openly for the Roman Catholic religion—a course which he feared to take without such support owing to the trouble that would certainly have arisen with his own people.

So as he did not get any satisfactory replies to his letters, but merely general counsels to

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persevere in the good way he was going he resolved to send an embassy of his own to Portugal to press his requests, and with this object asked Paez to send one of his priests.

They all wanted to go, so lots were drawn and the choice fell on Father Anthony Fernandez; this worthy, accompanied by an Abyssinian of distinction and ten Portuguese, set off from Dembea in the beginning of March, 1613, on what was to prove a most hazardous and adventurous trip. They "foresaw the difficulties and impracticableness of this journey by reason of the length of the unknown way among Moors, Turks, Cafres and other barbarous nations."

Indeed, if one looks at the map it is an astonishing thing that they should have ventured to attempt it. For their purpose was to proceed south from Dembea north of Lake Tana (where the king was camping) through Gojam, across the Nile, right through Abyssinia and over its southern boundaries across what is now Kenya to Malindi, some 100 miles north of Mombasa, a distance of nearly 1,200 miles as the crow flies, passing through quite unknown territory, and through countries inhabited by numbers of different nations professing a variety of religions, and owning allegiance to many different potentates.

They reached Gojam without difficulty, where they were well entertained by their friend, Ras Sela Cristos, the converted Viceroy of that province; and leaving Ombrama in his territory on April 15th, 1613, with an escort of forty men "arm'd with darts and targets," they pushed westwards. They

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had only been marching for three days when they were held up by a heathen tribe whom they called Gongas and had to send back for help. After this had arrived they went on for another three days and struck the Blue Nile at a spot they called Mina, which Fernandez says "lies upon the place where it [the Nile] turns towards the north." They crossed the river on a "float of sticks ty'd together with some gourds or calabashes to support it," pulled and pushed by swimmers; it took a whole day to get the party across the river by this method, and they found the passage boisterous and difficult.

Another one hundred and fifty miles south brought them amongst the Gallas, who tried to rob them, and who had to be bought off with bars of salt and pieces of muslin; and then, after a few more days' travel, they had further difficulty in crossing "a great river called Mateg" (probably the Didessa), and soon afterwards reached the kingdom of Narea, the most southerly Abyssinian possession of those days.

It is a little difficult to place these people, for though the district is still known as Enarea to-day, the description of the inhabitants differs markedly. Fernandez described them as "the best people in Ethiopia as is owned by the Abyssinian themselves. They are well shaped, their lips thin, their noses sharp, their colour not very black they keep their word and are sincere without any of the falsehood, lies and inventions of the Amaras. The land yields plenty of grain and feeds abundance of cattle. Gold is dealt for by weight . . . besides they have light bits of iron

beat out flat two fingers broad and three in length which pass for money."

They crossed this Eldorado, and then their troubles began in earnest. The ruler of Nerea was deeply suspicious of the objects of the mission, and shrewdly suspected the truth, namely, that they were proposing to introduce more Portuguese into the country. This was by no means to his liking, for being practically independent of the Emperor of Abyssinia, and having driven off the invading Galla, he had no mind to become a vassal of the Portuguese.

So instead of helping them on their way southwards towards Malindi he insisted on their proceeding eastwards through Bali, a kingdom bordering on Adal, which would have brought them out on to the coast somewhere south of C. Guadafui through the inhospitable and barren deserts of the Ogaden and Somaliland. They would, in fact, not have been able to get through this country at all, for apart from the natural difficulties they would have had to cross tracts belonging to Moslems and other bitter foes of both Abyssinians and Portuguese.

In spite of Fernandez' protests he was compelled to adopt the new route proposed, and set off with a small escort which abandoned him as soon as he reached the kingdom of Gingiro (probably the modern Jimma), where the travellers could only move by night, hiding in woods by day on account of marauding bands of Galla who infested the country.

They crossed the Omo (which they called the

Zebec) running between "dreadful precipices of upright rocks" on a "single piece of wood laid from one rock to another the breadth whereof was not small and the depth so great that it was frightful to behold; besides that in going upon it the plank bowed and gave way, as it had been a green twig."

They were being chased by Galla and they only took this perilous passage because "the dread of them was more persistent than the terror of the Bridge."

Soon afterwards they came to a river (probably another branch of the Omo) "where they were in an agony about passing it; for the King's guides being well acquainted with the manner of it contrived such a method as though altogether new to us seemed no less dangerous than the plank instead of a bridge and was thus. They killed a cow and of the hide made a great sack, into which they put the baggage and blowing strongly filled it full of wind like a bladder, and this was to serve for a boat. Then they took two poles and tied them very fast to the blown hide, and to these poles two men hung on the one side and two on the other, who were to hold very steady and be of equal weight to balance, and, therefore, if anyone happened to move all must plunge and the stream being very rapid we were in imminent danger of our lives. This machine was guided before by a good swimmer pulling a rope made fast to the hide, and two others swam behind thrusting the invention forward."

They managed to negotiate the passage in safety and penetrated into the kingdom of Gingiro, where the King received them, sitting on the top of "a sort of railed tower about six yards high. . . . All the courtiers stood below and he on the top of the elevation which was not unlike a cart wheel looking like a monkey on a block. . . . He was clad in a white silk Indian garment and was himself as black as a coal. . . ."

Conversation was carried on by means of an interpreter and must have been a little tedious, for "every time the King said anything to him to tell the Father he kissed the tips of his fingers of both hands: then falling down kissed the ground, and went to the Father who stood at a little distance to tell him what the King said"; the answer being delivered in the same way.

However, the result appears to have been quite satisfactory, for the interview terminated with a promise of assistance from the king and an exchange of presents; the king's present to Fernandez causing him some little perturbation, inasmuch as it consisted of an attractive young female slave.

The priest managed tactfully to exchange this embarrassing gift for a male slave and a mule, and then proceeded on his journey, crossing the Omo again into the kingdom of Kanbat, south of Guragê, which lies to the west of the chain of lakes running from Lake Zwai down to Rudolf.

In Kanbat they were attacked by people from the neighbouring country of Guragê, which was now as they said "on their left hand" as

they had turned east, and although only seventeen of the party had weapons they beat off the attack losing one of the Abyssinian ambassador's kinsmen by a poisoned arrow.

But the great fear and hatred in which the bulk of the Abyssinians held the Catholic religion was now to lead the expedition into disaster in even so far away a region as Kanbat. The emperor's representative, Manker, had come down here to collect tribute, and it happened that he was a strong adherent of the priesthood and therefore a bitter enemy of the Jesuits. He had indeed (according to Fernandez) been sent down by some of the great men of the Court for this very reason, namely, to harry the party and make their further journey impossible, and well he succeeded.

Representing to Amelmal, the Governor of Kanbat, that the Embassy had come without the emperor's leave and were on their way to facilitate the arrival of further Portuguese "with guns and firearms that kill at a great distance to oblige them to depart from the faith of their forefathers" (the latter part of which statement was certainly true), the Governor detained the whole party as prisoners while he sent messengers back to the emperor to inquire as to their *bona fides*.

The messengers, bribed by Manker, spent the next three months comfortably at a village about a week's journey off, and then returned saying that they had been unable to get through, having been held as prisoners by a neighbouring tribe.

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Another batch of messengers was now sent off, and these returned in June, 1614, the unhappy Fernandez having so far been fourteen months on the way. They brought the emperor's orders to let the mission go, together with presents for Amelmal and for Alico, the Moorish Governor of the next country they were to pass through.

But Manker was not defeated yet. He passed on messages to Alico of such a nature that as soon as Fernandez and his party reached his country they were thrown into prison, their goods, horses and mules taken from them, and they themselves searched thoroughly for the mischievous letters they were carrying. But " it pleased God that they did not find the letters which the Father had tied about the brawn of his arm."

By this time, however, Fernandez had begun to realise that to try to pursue his journey would be fruitless, and that they were simply courting death in endeavouring to do so, so he " asked for fire on pretence of taking tobacco which he had never used though it was then much practised in that country," and having got it he burned the incriminating documents.

They were held as prisoners for ten days while their captors, egged on by Manker, deliberated whether to kill them or not. Then they were set free on the condition that they went back by a different route to that by which they had come lest they should stir up trouble with Amelmal if they crossed Kanbat. Three of the Portuguese who had accompanied Fernandez were, however, retained by Alico " that they might serve him in his wars " ;

two of these escaped later, but one died in captivity.

Fernandez "departed much grieved both for the loss of his companions and the disappointment of his journey," and made his way slowly and painfully back northwards, incurring many more difficulties and dangers, including capture by some Galla "who were celebrating some festival of their idols and would have sacrificed them" but for the intervention of another party of friendly Galla of another tribe.

Eventually Fernandez got back to the emperor's court in September, 1614, after nineteen months of continuous travelling, hardship and danger, without achieving anything except to furnish additional proof of the extraordinary difficulty of a white man's getting into or out of Abyssinia through the encircling Moslem band which cut it off from the outside world.

Manker had the effrontery to return to the court later, and the incensed emperor condemned him to death; according to Paez the sentence was commuted to banishment to a remote Amba or mountain fortress at the instance of Fernandez, but this availed him little, for he was killed by a party of Galla while on his way to exile.

. . . . .

After the failure of Fernandez' mission the emperor seems to have determined to push on with the conversion of the country without waiting for the Portuguese reinforcements, and growing bolder he issued a public pronouncement to the effect that "for the future no one should presume

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to maintain there was but one nature in Christ, but that all should own two distinct natures, the human and divine both united and in the divine person."

This frontal attack on their cardinal dogma aroused the Abyssinian Church to frenzy; and Simon the Abuna set to work issuing bulls of excommunication against all and sundry daring to profess this heresy, until he was forced to desist by the King, *more* our Henry VIII, warning him that he was in a fair way to have his head removed from his shoulders.

The emperor indeed went on to give leave to all who wished to embrace the new faith, but being called away to suppress a rising among the Agaws (in the west of Gojam) Simon took advantage of his absence to start a wholesale persecution of the converts, a state of affairs that it took all the king's authority to suppress in view of the rising feeling against the successful Jesuits.

Paez seems to have accompanied the emperor on this expedition, or at all events to have been in Gojam at this time in the course of his travels about the country, and amongst his other achievements he must be credited with being the discoverer of the source of the Blue Nile at about this date. From the description he gives of the place it appears to have changed but little in the course of the last three centuries. He wrote of his great discovery as follows:

"On April 21st, 1618, I was with the Emperor of Ethiopia who was at the head of his army in the Kingdom of Gojam. He was encamped in

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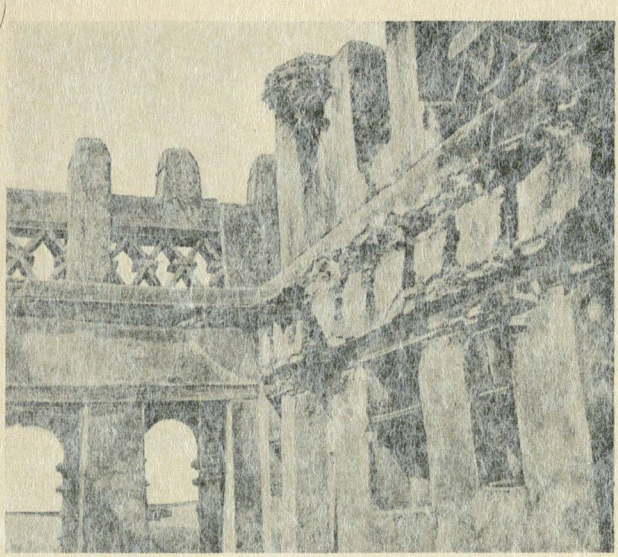

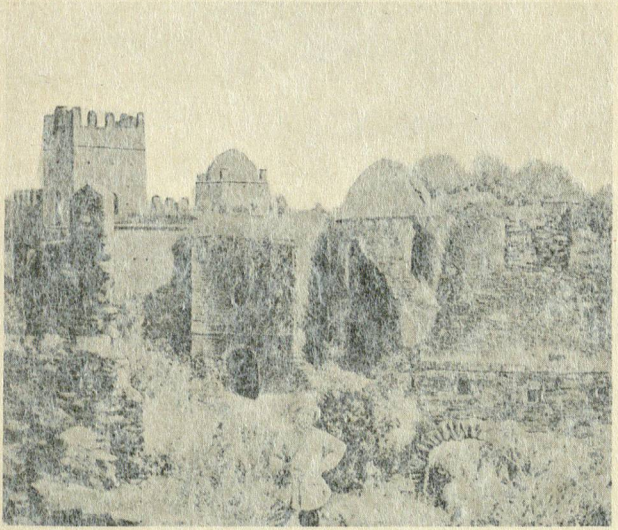

PALACE OF GONDAR

One of the remarkable buildings erected by the Portuguese. They made their own tools, trained native workmen, and produced palaces, churches, and bridges which are still standing to-day.

the district of Sakala, the country of the Agaws, near a little mountain which does not seem very high because all those around it are much higher. I went there and I examined closely everything that was around me; I discovered two springs round in shape, of which one might be four palms, in diameter. I cannot express what was my joy on seeing what Cyrus, what Cambyses, what Alexander, what Julius Caesar had so ardently and so faithfully desired to know."

Partly no doubt in order to distract public attention and to increase his prestige in the country, Paez set to work on his return from Gojam on the construction of the wonderful palace for the king, the ruins of which exist to-day.

It was perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the Jesuits in Abyssinia. They had neither tools nor skilled artisans, so Paez himself made hammers, mallets and chisels, handling them himself and teaching the people to dig, hew and square the stones from the nearby white stone quarry. He trained joiners and carpenters in the same way, and made a substitute for lime out of a sort of clay.

The building was a two-storey one which in itself amazed the Abyssinians, who "came from the remotest parts to behold it, and called it a house upon a house"; the result was a tremendous increase in the reputation of the Portuguese.

The palace was faced within and without with squared white stone; one room was fifty feet long by fifteen wide; a wide staircase led from the ground to the upper floors and on to a flat

roof whence rose "a little room like a closet which the emperor was much pleased with because from it he had the distant view of all the great Lake and the adjacent country and saw at hand all that came in and out without being himself discovered by anybody."

This room the ingenious Paez fitted with a spring lock of his own construction, a device which curiously enough the king did not at first like on account of the trouble of using the key. But Paez advised him to keep it, and in fact it was later the means of saving the king's life.

For, instigated by the Abuna and the Church, a plot was hatched against the king by some of the nobles, and they came to the palace to kill him. He led the conspirators up to this little room on the roof which they entered, ignorant of the properties of such a devilish contrivance as a spring lock, and the king, seizing the opportunity, snapped the door shut on them, and was able to deal with them at his leisure.

But still the tide of national feeling rose, until a large part of the country broke out into a rebellion headed by Julius, the emperor's son-in-law, and Simon the Abuna. Much desultory fighting took place, for the emperor was not strong enough to risk a pitched battle, so numerous was the army of the malcontents, and Julius determined to end the matter by the assassination of the emperor. Followed by a small party he rode boldly up to and through his father-in-law's camp, and had almost reached his tent when he was struck down and killed. The news of his

death caused his army to break up in confusion, and Simon was killed in the ensuing slaughter.

An interval of peace followed during which Socinios arranged with the Turkish Governor of Suaken to allow some more Jesuits, J. de Mattos and Antony Bruno, from India to land, and two of them actually got through to Fremona in 1620, the first Europeans to arrive or depart for nearly twenty years.

Encouraged by this, by his success over Julius, and by the peaceful interval that had followed, Socinios now went a step further and sent out another proclamation forbidding all persons to keep Saturday but only Sunday as the true Christian Sabbath.

A wave of fury swept through the country at this, and an anonymous letter in which "he was devoted to hell" was addressed to the king, and distributed about the land. This so enraged him that he issued yet another proclamation ordering everyone to work on Saturday under pain of all sorts of drastic punishments, and by way of showing that he meant what he said, he ordered a monk to have his tongue cut out for upholding the single nature, and caused a general who had refused to work on Saturday to be beaten with rods and publicly degraded.

The inevitable result followed. A rebellion broke out under Jonael, one of the most powerful chiefs in the land, and when this was suppressed another flamed up in Damot; rivers of blood flowed before the trouble was overcome.

Meanwhile, Paez had been completing his

second church at Gorgora, a really magnificent building of white hewn stone, and when this was finished in 1621 the emperor decided to take the final plunge.

So early in the following year he publicly professed the Roman Catholic faith, and was solemnly received into the Church by Paez, who thus, after over a quarter of a century of unremitting toil, adventure, travel and hardship saw his work crowned with success.

But almost at the very moment of his triumph he was struck down by fever brought on by overwork and exposure, and in spite of the efforts of his devoted and sorrowing companions he died at Gorgora in May, 1622.

He was a wonderful character; indeed it would not be an exaggeration to describe him as a really great man. No better description of his many-sided personality could be given than that written by Bruce, an avowed enemy of the Jesuits and all their ways. He says: "He had been seven years a captive in Arabia in the hands of the Moors, and nineteen years missionary in Abyssinia in the worst of times, and had always extricated himself from the most perilous situations with honour to himself and advantage to his religion. In person he was very tall and strong, but lean from continual abstinence and labour . . . he had a very good understanding which he had cultivated every hour of his life by study or practice.

"Besides possessing universal knowledge in scholastic divinity and the books belonging to

his profession, he understood Greek, Latin and Arabic well, was a good mathematician, an excellent mechanic, wrought always with his own hands, and in building was at once a careful active labourer and an architect of refined taste and judgment. He was by his own study and industry painter, mason, carver, carpenter, smith, farrier, quarrier, and was able to build convents and palaces and to furnish them without calling one workman to his assistance. . . .

"With all these accomplishments he was so affable, compassionate and humble in his nature that he never had opportunity of conversing even with heretics without leaving them his friends. He was remarkably cheerful in his temper; and the most forward always in promoting innocent mirth of that species which we in England call fun. . . . Above all, he was a patient diligent instructor of youth.

"In a word, he was the hinge upon which the Catholic religion turned. He had found the seeds of it sown in the country for a hundred years before his time which had borne little fruit and was then apparently on the decline; . . . after Paez's death in six years it fell."

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CHAPTER XXII

PATRIARCHATE OF AFFONSO MENDEZ

1623-1633

PART I

JOURNEYS OF AFFONSO MENDEZ AND JEROME LOBO

The news of the success which was attending Paez's efforts in Abyssinia filtered through to Portugal, and besides causing the king and the Jesuits lively satisfaction inspired them to further efforts.

Fresh batches of priests were despatched during the next few years, and the very remarkable and stirring adventures which these stout-hearted pioneers encountered make excellent reading and fill one with admiration for their courage and hardihood.

The first to be despatched was one Jerome Lobo, and the account of his departure exceeds any story of modern hustle that could be imagined. He seems to have been an ignorant and uneducated person, only in his novitiate, and why he should have been chosen is not easy to understand. He was living peacefully at one of the Jesuit establishments at Coimbra, when he

received the news early on the morning of Friday, April 16th, 1621, that he was to be sent on a mission to the Indies.

At 9.30 he was at the College, where he got his orders ; at three o'clock he left, and at midnight he reached Lisbon. On the following Tuesday the Grand Inquisitor made him a sub-deacon, and on Wednesday and Thursday he was made deacon and priest ; on Sunday he said his first Mass ! and on the following Thursday, 29th, he sailed for India.

Unfortunately it proved to have been a case of more haste less speed. The six ships of the fleet (on one of which the new Viceroy of India, Dom Alfonso de Noronha, was being conveyed) were ill-found ; they had recently returned from India, and though many had died on board they had not been cleaned, the salt meat was rotten, the water stale and bad.

They met with contrary winds and were becalmed for weeks near the line. Illness set in, the remedies applied by the doctors and surgeons killed the sufferers instead of curing them ; and out of a complement of nine hundred men more than three hundred died in a few days. Most of the rest were sick ; Lobo himself was only saved by having leeches applied to his head.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that it was decided to abandon the journey, and to the intense relief of the survivors orders were given to return to Lisbon, which they reached on 7th October, five months after their departure.

It is not without interest to note that Lobo

reports that the failure of the journey cost the Portuguese Ormuz, which he says was taken by the Persians assisted by the English in October, 1621, owing to the non-arrival of the reinforcements carried by the Viceroy's fleet.

Dom Alfonso de Noronha was not made of such stout stuff as his compatriots, and "having always in his mind the dangers and sufferings he had undergone preferred to give up the viceroyalty of India rather than to re-embark."

In his stead the king appointed Dom Francisco da Gama, the Count of Vidigueira, who having already held the post of Viceroy made vastly better arrangements for the journey on this second attempt, on which a fleet of five vessels set out on March 18th, 1622, Lobo being on the Viceroy's ship.

They rounded the Cape of Good Hope without much adventure, but once in the Indian Ocean encountered a new peril. For now they had to reckon not only with the Turks, but with European enemies, and near Mozambique they were attacked by a combined fleet of three English and three Dutch vessels.

One of the Portuguese ships had been lost sight of in a storm soon after leaving the Cape; two of the others were driven on the African coast and captured; the remaining two were forced into Mozambique, where one ran on a rock and was burnt to avoid capture and the other ran aground.

This unfortunate interruption to the journey occurred in July, and the Viceroy with Lobo and

the other survivors were compelled to remain at Mozambique until the beginning of September; and although during this time many of them died from wounds or fever, yet they managed to fit out some small boats in which they proposed to attempt the journey across the Indian Ocean to Goa.

The largest of these was, in addition to being fitted with masts and sails, manned by twenty-eight rowers, and in these cockle shells the little party set out on September 8th. A storm scattered them; one of them got to Ceylon "without knowing where they were," and reported that the Viceroy and all his people were lost; another found its way to Coulaon about twenty-five leagues from Cape Comorin. The Viceroy's galliott and the two other small boats put back into Mozambique, and then set off again nothing daunted; after being nearly wrecked by a heavy gale they eventually struck Cochim, where they were greeted with the most enthusiastic rejoicings as of men risen from the dead. They were carried in procession round the town, amid musicians and singers, and fêted in every way; incidentally they were offered perfumed baths which Lobo apparently did not appreciate, for after saying that he *had* to take several of these baths, he naively remarks that "the Indians like to bathe often and reproach us with being always dirty and unclean; these reproaches are not ill-founded since it is true that the majority of us Europeans are by no means at such pains in washing and cleaning ourselves as are the Indians"—a fitting commentary on the

habits of the Portuguese which, according to Alvarez, had been criticised even by the Abyssinians when da Lima's expedition arrived.

A fleet of nearly two hundred vessels came from Goa to escort them thither, but their numbers do not appear to have prevented their being in lively terror of a fleet of eleven English and Dutch vessels that bore in sight just as they were getting into harbour, which they reached safely on December 16th, 1622, the Viceroy and his companions having been no less than nine months on their journey from Lisbon.

Here Lobo remained rather more than a year, setting out again on January 26th, 1624, to join other Portuguese missionaries who had meanwhile been sent out for the Abyssinian crusade.

Four others, headed by the celebrated Father Emanuel d'Almeyda, had sailed from Bassam on November 28th, 1622, and had got as far as Dofar by May of the following year; they did not in fact reach the Jesuit headquarters in Abyssinia until March, 1624!

Four others, travelling via Massawa, got in safely a little later; two trying to get in through Zeila were captured and beheaded by the Turks, and two others (of whom Lobo was one) made an extraordinarily venturesome attempt to get in by Melinde, which of course they had to abandon after nearly dying of hunger and thirst, and managed to get back to Goa.

But the Jesuit headquarters had determined to make a third attempt to introduce a fully-fledged Patriarch into Abyssinia—why they had

not previously appointed Paez, who was already there, is difficult to understand—and so in February, 1623, Affonso Mendez "of the Society of Jesus, Doctor of Divinity, and a person excellently qualified for that function," was consecrated to that high office with much pomp at Lisbon and "life being very uncertain in such a tedious voyage" two others were at the same time appointed as Bishops to accompany him, F. James Seco as Bishop of Nice, and F. John de Rotha as Bishop of Hierapolis.

These three sailed from Lisbon in March, 1623, arriving at Mozambique in September, where they wintered; only two of them reached Goa on May 28th, 1624, the Bishop of Nice having died on the way.

There they were held up by the usual difficulty of lack of shipping until November, and again at Diu, which they were not able to leave until April of the following year (1625), after picking up Lobo at Bassam en route.

They succeeded in getting into Abyssinia through Baylur in the Dankali country (where they were held up from May 8th to June 5th), and finally reached Fremona, the Jesuit headquarters, on June 21st, 1625, two years and three months after leaving Lisbon!

Such was the journey into Abyssinia at that time.

The stirring events that occurred during the Patriarchate of Affonso Mendez are recorded by several of the Jesuits who were there at the time, notably by Mendez himself. But of all the

accounts none is so interesting and even racy as the very human story written by Jerome Lobo.

He seems to have been specially marked out for adventure and hardship, and he records it all in simple and direct language, enlightened in places by flashes of shrewd peasant humour that go some way toward making one understand how it was he was enabled to survive the adventures he encountered.

It has already been seen how his first attempt to get into Abyssinia failed; his second was no more successful. The idea of trying to trek northwards into that country from Melinde proves how completely ignorant the Portuguese were of the conditions in that part of Africa, but, ignorance being bliss, Lobo and another set off on their second effort from Goa on January 26th, 1624, on a Portuguese galliot disguised as Arabs or Turks, though the account of the costume they adopted is a little mixed.

They reached the African coast "somewhere between Guardafui and Mogadoxo", according to Lobo, but even this wide "margin of error" was not wide enough, for in fact they struck land some way south of Mogadishu. They did not know where they were, and eventually by pure luck were seen from Pate, whence a row-boat put off and brought them to shore.

There they found an Augustine monk who soon convinced them that all the information they had been given at Goa was wholly wrong; and that the Galla with whom they had proposed to make arrangements for the journey on into

Abyssinia were savages who, driven out from their own country, had spread out to the coast "pillaging and ravaging everything and eating human flesh which made them very much feared in those districts."

Lobo accordingly came to the decision to leave his companion (who seems to have been a weaker vessel) with the Augustine monk, and to push on to "spy out the land" and endeavour to discover a route into Abyssinia for himself. His idea was to proceed on foot along the coast as far as Jubo (forty leagues, about one hundred and fifty miles), being followed along the coast by a sort of canoe made of "a few very thin and very light planks sewn together with coarser thread" propelled by eight paddlers; one Portuguese and an Abyssinian accompanied him.

Needless to say, he found this exceedingly arduous. They hugged the shore lest they should lose sight of their boat, and consequently had to climb rocks, cross streams, wade through quicksands, all this barefooted on the burning soil, carrying their provisions and water on their backs. They ran out of food, and were almost dying of hunger when they came across some fishermen who gave them some fish in exchange for tobacco.

More dead than alive they struggled into Jubo (Jubaland—probably the mouth of the Juba River), and the description he gives of the reception by these people (a branch of Galla) and of some of their customs is most refreshing.

"The manner in which this King receives strangers is rather curious. He sits on the ground

in the middle of his hut all his courtiers around him holding sticks of a length proportionate to the ranks of the persons he is about to receive. . . . As soon as the stranger who is to be given audience enters, all the courtiers fall upon him and beat him with their sticks until he gets to the door and puts his hand on it. Then they all return to their seats as if nothing had happened and pay him compliments. In spite of the friendly reception I had established with them, I did not get off any more cheaply; and when I asked them the reason of this extraordinary ceremony they answered it was in order to teach those who visited them that there is no nation in the world braver than theirs, and that all must humble themselves before them. . . ." After which pleasant greeting Lobo remarks dryly that "I could not however help thinking to myself that I should perhaps have done better not to expose myself to the mercies of such a brutal and barbarous nation."

Of another neighbouring tribe, presumably Arab or Somali, he says: "They hold it to be a great dishonour to have in their family a daughter who is not chaste and so they sew up her parts which can only be unsewn by her husband." His naive comment on this is: "Certainly although the custom may be a little barbarous one cannot avoid admiring the care with which they preserve among themselves a virtue so rare everywhere else"—rather a sweeping generalisation.

His zoological reports must presumably have been gathered from hearsay: "this coast is full

of serpents as well as lions, tigers (!), elephants, monkeys, antelope and gazelles. There are monkeys as large as four months' old calves, and serpents fifteen palms long thicker than an ordinary man."

Another tribe of Galla who lived on raw beef anointed themselves with the blood of the animal or hung the entrails round their own necks for some time, after which they gave them to their wives!

These people were less friendly and actually attacked Lobo, being driven off by the terror inspired by the sound of his firearms. This difficulty, however, added to the fact that he had begun to realise something of the actual distance from there to Abyssinia and some of the obstacles he would have to overcome, decided him to return—to try to pass through "six different sorts of Galles and nine nations of Gentiles and Moslems . . . would have been to tempt divine Providence too much."

He was then seized by a violent fever and was so ill that he was like to die. His hosts called in an Arab doctor, who seems to have alarmed Lobo by his appearance. "He entered my room holding in his hand a mallet, a sort of dagger covered with rust and three horned leeches which were nearly half a foot long."

His modus operandi was no less formidable than his appearance. He applied the leeches, and while they were at work he sat "sharpening his dagger all the time repeating continually that he would cause me no pain."

Then pulling off the leeches he stuck the dagger vigorously into the places opened up by the animals, so that three streams of blood spurted out, repeating the whole process several times until "I thought there was not a drop of blood left in my body." The wounds were eventually plastered up with lumps of grease.

After this drastic treatment (in spite of which Lobo *mirabile dictu* recovered) it is not surprising that he did not feel strong enough to tramp back the hundred and fifty miles to Pate along the coast, so he went back there in his small row-boat, where he picked up his companion, and fortunately found a vessel which conveyed them back to Diu. Here he remained for some months until joining Mendez at Bassam in January, 1625.

He accompanied Mendez into Abyssinia—that journey is described elsewhere—but when the patriarch left Fremona on November 20th to go to the king's court at Dancaz, Lobo was left in charge and did not witness the great ceremonies attendant on the reception of the king into the Roman Catholic Church.

He seems to have travelled about extensively in Abyssinia, the most interesting of his journeys being that which he undertook in company with the Viceroy of Tigré on the emperor's instructions to search for the bones of Christovão da Gama.

They took with them as guide on this expedition an old Arab—so old that he had to be carried—who had witnessed da Gama's death, a statement which it is hard to believe. Da

Gama had been killed in 1542, and this expedition cannot have taken place before 1626, so that assuming the old man to have been ten years old at the time of the events he is said to have witnessed he must have been ninety-four at this time, an age rarely attained among these peoples.

Lobo was delighted at the opportunity which this trip afforded him. They had to cross a good deal of Galla country so that an escort of troops was necessary, but even so their friends seemed to think they were going to certain death, and "melted into tears on saying good-bye to us."

The little army grew, however, as it went along, collecting parties from the local garrisons, all of whom brought with them, according to the Abyssinian custom, their wives, slaves and children; as the unfortunate peasants through whose country this horde passed had to supply them with food and drink (as they do still to-day) it may well be imagined that they were not encouraged to stay long in any one place.

The old Moslem and a Christian Abyssinian who had had the account of da Gama's death from his father were in entire agreement as to the exact spot where the Portuguese leader's remains would be found; they averred that what was left of him (for Grañ had had the body dismembered) had been collected and buried by real Christians, and that a pile of stones had been erected over the grave, and that this pile had been increased in size immensely by the fact that every passing Moslem threw a stone on to the pile; nearby, he said, was a spring into which

Grañ had thrown da Gama's head and the body of a dead dog as a mark of supreme contempt.

And surely enough they found a great pile of stones near a spring in the locality described by the two old guides. In Lobo's words, "we pulled down with much trouble this mass of stones . . . and we discovered the precious relics. . . . I picked up the teeth and the lower jaw. I cannot express the emotions by which I was transported on seeing these remains of so great a man and thinking that God had made use of me to preserve them so that one day if it so pleased our holy father the Pope they might be exposed for the veneration of the Faithful. All the by-standers melted into tears. . . ."

They were, however, not able to spend much time in their pious reflections, for they found that they were almost surrounded by a large body of Galla horsemen, from whose attentions they were only able to escape by a forced march through the mountains.

On his return to the king's court Lobo carefully stored his treasures away and in the month of May following sent them to India to the Viceroy, the Count of Vidigueira, Dom Cristovão da Gama's grand-nephew, together with "a piece of armour and an image of the Virgin which that brave Portuguese always wore, which an Abyssinian gentleman had presented to me."

Whether any of the relics which Lobo had collected were indeed the remains he believed them to be is, of course, more than doubtful, but it is quite certain that he honestly believed

them to be so, and the Abyssinian chronicles also record the story in much detail and in full acceptance of the statements. They overlook the fact that da Gama's head had been sent to Zebid by Grañ immediately after his murder, so that his teeth and jaw could hardly have been in Abyssinia!

After this Lobo was busy with his duties at Fremona, and his travels about the country. He founded a church in Gojam, and claims to have followed in Paez's footsteps to the sources of the Blue Nile, though this is open to doubt.

He tells a wonderful story in connection with the sacrifices which the Agaw make at the head of the Nile. After the ox has been slaughtered the priest covers himself with the animal's fat and then takes his seat in a straw chair on the top of a pile of logs. The wood is fired and the log consumed "without the priest being affected or the fat with which he is covered melting or running down in any way."

After this it is almost surprising to be told that though he saw many crocodiles in the Nile "neither I nor those to whom I have spoken concerning the crocodile have ever seen him weep, and I attribute what has been said of its tears to the collection of those fables with which one amuses children!" It must have been a great disappointment to him.

He describes how he was attacked by a poison-spitting snake, which did not kill him, as he was more than four paces away, which he says is the limit of their range. This story was generally

discredited, but strange to say it is possibly quite true. Such a snake was brought to the Zoological Gardens in London in 1927, and on being taken out of its travelling box spat at the keeper and injured him seriously; indeed he almost lost his sight as a result, and for some hours was quite blind.

On another occasion when he was in camp an Abyssinian monk "who though blind passed for the most learned man in the Kingdom" came to see him. "He knew the whole of the Scriptures and seemed to have taken more trouble to learn them by heart than to understand them. He was a great talker; he quoted them (the Scriptures) often and nearly always inappropriately."

He apparently appreciated Lobo's *tej* and got very drunk in the evening: in the morning by way of making amends he regaled his host with a series of tales of the miracles of their national saint, Tekla Haymanot.

According to one of these, a devil had taken up his quarters in a spring greatly to the distress of a congregation of monks who drew their water from it. Tekla Haymanot came to their rescue and wrought with the devil converting him at length to Christianity, the only point on which the devil proved obdurate being his objection to circumcision. The saint, however, at length prevailed on him to allow him to perform the operation, after which the convert adopted the dress of a monk and lived a holy life for ten years.

Lobo's apposite remark on this tale is delightful. "I interrupted him and told him that his

stories confirmed one thing we had found, namely, that there were many devils in Abyssinia hidden under monks habits, and that they were none the less evil for that."

This criticism seems to have been a veritable "cri du cœur," for, for some reason which is not clear, Lobo seems to have incurred the dislike of the Abyssinians from the very first, and to a greater extent than almost any of his colleagues. Soon after he arrived he was told to change his name, as it was offensive to the Abyssinians. He was one of the first marked out for death when persecution started, and it was only due to his resource and energy that he managed to escape from the country, as well as from many other perils elsewhere, with his life.

If his ministrations to the sick often followed the lines of one "cure" he describes, it is possible to guess at least some of the causes of his unpopularity. He says:

"A man suffering from asthma came to consult me in Easter week. He brought me two measures of wheat and a sheep. After having turned over the leaves of my books thoroughly, I told him to drink the water of a goat every morning. I do not know if he felt better because since then I never saw him, but we found his mutton excellent."

This coarse and cynical anecdote gives some clue to the character of the man, but it must be admitted that he was an amazingly adventurous traveller. He estimates that he must have journeyed some 38,000 leagues. After being turned

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out of Abyssinia in 1633 he took ship for India, was wrecked on the coast of Natal, took ship from there round the Cape and got to Angola; then he journeyed to Brazil, was captured by Dutch pirates, marooned by them on a desert island, and escaping thence in a small boat found his way back by slow stages to Lisbon, where he died in his bed in 1678 at the age of eighty-five. There can rarely have been a man who seemed less likely to attain a peaceful ending at such an age.

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST PHASE

Fasilidas, who succeeded his father as emperor, lost no time in making his intentions as regards religious matters perfectly clear.

The Jesuits had come to pay their respects to him on his succession, but he refused to allow them to remain at court, sent them to their out-stations, took away all the property and lands that had been given them, and finally ordered them all to Fremona. They had previously been forced to give up their small cannon and other firearms, which they did very unwillingly, and as a result their journey to Fremona was attended by much danger and many difficulties. They were robbed of most of their possessions by those who were supposed to escort them, and had it not been for the efforts of a party of Portuguese laymen brought up in the nick of time by the intrepid Lobo, it is probable that they would have been murdered before reaching Fremona. As it was they were guided across a pass in the mountains while their adversaries were waiting for them on another and more usual route, and they thus got away " before they were discovered

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"The next day they all returned to Dancaz . . . carrying the empty coffin, and by it a man clad in the emperor's robes and the crown on his head riding on a mule with a silk umbrella over him in all respects representing the Emperor. . . ."

Father Emanuel d'Almeyda, who was present at the funeral at Ganeta-Jesus, thus describes this very remarkable and striking ceremony :

" An Egyptian had made him a bier with small steps almost square into which they put the body wrapped up in buckram covering it with a large piece of tafety of several colours. Before this bier or coffin were carried first the Imperial colours being of two sorts, the one they call *sandecas*, and are coloured, staves for poles with balls of metal gilt on the top. . . . The others are like standards of white cloth with some red stripes in the middle, neither of them bearing any arms or device. . . . By them went the kettle-drums beating at times a melancholy tone ; then two or three of the best horses he used to ride with their richest furniture ; next several pages carried parts of his imperial robes and ornaments, one his vest, another his sword, a third his crown and so others his sash, his beads, his javelin, his target, etc.

" These things divers persons took by turn, showing them to excite tears and sighs and to this end the Queen herself carried his crown on her head a considerable span. . . . The Queen, his daughters and all the ladies then at Court rode on mules, their hair cut off, and a slip of fine white cloth tied about their heads.

" All the company was in mourning which is any old rag, and those who would express it most put on a black leather or cloth and clipped their heads. . . .

But this was more than could be borne. All the emperor's family, the courtiers and nobles, united at last in opposition to a course of action that was decimating the population and ruining the country. Headed by the empress and the emperor's eldest son, Fasilidas, they wrought with him powerfully "and giving him no respite he was so perplexed that he took his bed." From here, in spite of Mendez' despairing efforts, the emperor abdicated in favour of his son, Fasilidas, and issued in June[1] 1632, the epoch-making proclamation that sounded the death-knell of Jesuit aspirations in Abyssinia, and restored to that country the free practice of that form of religion which is theirs to-day.

"Hear, hear, we first gave you this faith believing it was good, but innumerable people have been killed about it with Elos, Gabriel, Tekla Giosgis, Cerica Cristos, and now lately with these peasants; for which reasons we restore you the faith of your forefathers. The former priests may return to their churches, put in their Tabots,[2] and say masses, and do you rejoice."

This proclamation was received with indescribable manifestations of joy, and if the Jesuits had ever been in any doubt as to the popularity of the old faith that they had been seeking to displace, it must have been finally set at rest.

The old chronicler writes: "The whole camp as if they had had some great deliverance from

[1] Either the 9th or the 25th; the evidence is conflicting.

[2] The representation of the Ark of the Covenant, present on the altar of every Abyssinian church.

the enemy rang with shouts and acclamations. The monks and clergy who had felt the greatest weight of the Fathers' hatred lifted up their thankful voices to heaven. The promiscuous multitude of men and women danced and capered. . . . They brake to pieces their own and the rosaries of all they met and some they burnt . . . others ran about singing for joy . . . chanting forth the following lines :"

> " At length the sheep of Ethiopia freed
> From the bold lions of the West
> Securely in their pastures feed.
> St. Mark and Cyril's doctrines have o'ercome
> The follies of the Church of Rome.
> Rejoice, rejoice, sing Hallelujahs all
> No more the western wolves
> Our Ethiopia shall enthrall."

The Abyssinian priests lost no time in asserting themselves, and we are told that a few days after the edict was issued " there was a general circumcision, and then followed an universal baptism, after their former manner which being done they concluded themselves free from the obligation of being tied to one wife, and publicly declared that for the future they would marry and re-marry as they pleased."

The emperor did not long survive the downfall of the religion he had espoused. Whether he came to a natural end or was put out of the way is not certain, but he died on September 17th, 1632, at the age of sixty-one, after a twenty-seven years' reign, in the course of which he had caused more internal suffering and bloodshed in the unhappy kingdom than almost any other sovereign of that country.

rebels was urged by the Jesuits, and two instances are quoted by the Portuguese themselves which show the fanatical intolerance of these Christian zealots.

The head of the Abyssinian Church under the Abuna has always been known as the Ichege, and the holder of that office dying about that time was in accordance with custom buried under the altar of one of the churches. Mendez, however, ordered the body to be disinterred and thrown out, causing immense offence to the people at large.

The other case was that Mendez caused a woman accused of witchcraft to be thrown into prison, in spite of the general feeling prevailing in Abyssinia and elsewhere in the east that such persons were merely demented, and as such under the special protection of Providence. Moreover, as the Portuguese themselves admitted, "it was heinously resented because it is a positive received opinion in Ethiopia that there can be no contract or familiarity with the devil so as to do harm to any person by way of witchcraft . . . whosoever believes that there are any such sorcerers must of necessity grant that there are two Gods for none but God has power to grant or take away life."

In many other ways Mendez rode rough-shod over the cherished beliefs and customs of the people, until the king's own entourage, irritated by these continual affronts and appalled by the bloodshed that was being caused throughout the country, threw their influence into the scale against the Jesuits and began to make an impression on the emperor's mind.

His own nephew rose against him, and riding into his uncle's camp endeavoured to kill him, but was himself speared just outside the emperor's tent, and then the Lasta rebels gained a real victory over the royal troops.

At last the emperor himself began to see the necessity for conciliation, and in 1631 pronounced that " all the troubles in the state were occasioned by the change in religion and that he could never be safe until he allowed the people more liberty on that point, he . . . caused proclamation to be made that all men might follow their ancient customs provided they were not repugnant to faith."

The fury with which Mendez received the news of this proclamation, issued during his absence from court, may well be imagined. At one stroke he saw the whole of his work undone, and the edifice which Paez had founded and he had developed, beginning to crumble.

Bitter and prolonged controversies took place between him and the now wearied and enfeebled emperor, who was at length persuaded to reissue the proclamation in an amended form, saying that it did not mean what it had been obviously intended to mean, namely, that the people could go back to the Alexandrian faith if they wished.

The effect of this was to cause the Lasta rebellion to break out in full force again, and the king was compelled to proceed with his whole army against them. They were heavily defeated with ghastly slaughter, 8,000 corpses being counted on the field alone, in addition to many thousands more slain in the pursuit.

candidate making a trifling payment and being breathed on by the Abuna. Bruce tells a remarkable story of such an ordination witnessed by him when a number of men and children presented themselves at a distance, not daring to approach too near. He asked who they were and what they wanted and when they told him they wanted to be " debtera " (deacons) he made two or three signs with a small iron cross, blew on them, and said " Let them be deacons."

On another occasion we are told that " it once happened that almost 3,000 resorting to the Abuna to be ordained he being then busy bid them all take what orders they would and go about their business ! "

But however defective their own Church might be it could hardly be expected that the ecclesiastics, or even the people as a whole, would welcome this cyclonic reformation and would abandon the faith for which they had been fighting against Moslem, Jew, and pagan for centuries.

They were at first almost stunned by the swiftness of the king's action, and for a couple of years the tide of Jesuit ascendency flowed on.

According to the annual report sent home by the Jesuits written by Gaspard Paez in July 1626, the Fathers displayed great activity in translating the Scriptures and other works of devotion, and even established a printing-press towards the cost of which the emperor contributed 1,000 gold crowns.

Lands were given to the Jesuits in Dembea and in Dancaz, houses and seminaries were built

for them, and though some of them were murdered in the districts to which they penetrated, yet backed by the whole power and authority of the emperor and his army they had by 1628 reached the high-water mark of their influence. There were at this time eleven " stations " or missions in the country manned by nineteen priests, five of whom arrived in 1628, in addition to numbers of lay brothers and others, and Mendez may well have been pardoned for imagining that he was on the high-road to complete and permanent success; he claimed to have made a hundred thousand converts.[1]

But he lacked the great gifts and personality of Paez and, above all, his tact and tolerance, and his initial success seems to have blinded him to the real antagonism to his teachings which existed in the country and which he fanned by his bigoted intolerance and arrogance, continually urging the emperor to increased persecution of those of his subjects who refused to recognise the Roman Church.

A Galla invasion of Gojam was followed by a rebellion in Tigrê. No sooner was this suppressed than the Agaws of Agawmdir rebelled against the new faith. Then the Amharans broke out in revolt, and after this Lasta rose against the emperor.

The utmost severity against the nationalist

[1] The eleven Portuguese stations were distributed as follows, Gorgora and Ganeta Jesus in Dembea, north of Lake Tana; Nebesse, Adaxa, Saria and Colela, in Gojam; Lingenegns (or Gabrama), in Damot; Tangha in Agawmdir; Adeghana in Begamdir; and Fremona and Debaroa in Tigre.

church and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. On another occasion he said to him *Feed my sheep.* That moreover the Pope of Rome is the true and legitimate successor of St. Peter, that he has the same power, dignity and primacy over all the Catholic Church throughout the world, and that he cannot err in matters of faith as having that promise of the Son of God in the person of St. Peter, *I have asked for thee that thy faith shall not fail.*

"Therefore, we recognise the Roman Church as the Mother and Mistress of all churches and with her condemn and anathematise all the heresies which she has condemned and anathematised notably those of Dioscuros and Eutychus as they had been specially embedded here, and promise the obedience due to the said Roman Church in the person of our holy Father Pope Urban VIII at present sitting. So God help us and these holy Evangils."

A fairly complete and sweeping submission which must have delighted Mendez as much as it infuriated the bulk of the Abyssinian nation. One chronicler reported by Tellez says that the oath went even further and included the words: "we humbly submit our person and our Empire at the feet of our Holy Father the Pope."

Be that as it may, the oath was repeated by the king's sons; and his brother, Ras Sela Cristos, carried away by the excitement of the moment,

drew his sword and swore that he would "pass it through the body of any who in future dared offend against the church and the service of God."

Mendez followed this by excommunicating all those who should break their oath, and concludes his account of the proceedings by remarking: "And with this this glorious day came to an end."

On the principle presumably of striking while the iron was hot and of impressing on the country the power of the new faith, Mendez induced the king to issue on the very next day a series of proclamations which for sheer intolerance are difficult to surpass.

These people who had professed the Alexandrian faith for over a thousand years were now suddenly told to accept a number of new doctrines forthwith; all viceroys were to take the same oath as the king had done in the presence of one of the Jesuits; all schismaticks and enemies of the church were to be regarded as enemies of the crown; the church should take back its ancient rights and privileges and the patriarchs and prelates could arrest criminals and enemies of the church even in any asylum or place of refuge, and all Ethiopian priests should be suspended from the exercise of their functions unless and until approved by Mendez himself.

Moreover, no priest could be ordained until after instruction by the patriarch.

This last was the peculiar privilege of the Abuna, a privilege which it must be admitted had been and is until to-day abominably abused. For ordination consisted (and consists) in the

business: "I considered that the time had come to treat of more important matters."

His own account of his interview with the emperor is of much interest. He says:

"Thus I represented to His Majesty the benefits the Crown of Portugal had conferred on all Ethiopia, the help by way of soldiers, the fact that already two Patriarchs had been sent and two Bishops with each; the financial support sent each year from Portugal to the descendants of those Portuguese who during the past century had guaranteed Ethiopia against the Moslems.

"I represented each point very strongly to him, and concluded by saying that all that tended to no other object than to secure a real union of faith and religion between these two crowns."

After reciting the difficulties and hardship met with by his predecessors, and explaining that in spite of this the Pope had consented to send yet one more Patriarch in the person of himself (Mendez) in response to the emperor's request, he concluded:

"To all this I added that I asked for no other recognition than that His Majesty, the Prince, his sons and the other Lords of the Court should publicly swear obedience to the Holy See, and union of faith with the Catholics."

To this modest request the king acceded at once, and the third day from then was fixed for the public ceremony.

It must indeed have been an impressive sight, this second conversion of Ethiopia on February 11th, 1626, in a scene of mingled Eastern and

western splendour, set among the background of the towering Abyssinian mountains. The emperor clothed in purple seated on a high throne covered with silk cloth, on his head a crown sparkling with jewels, around him his sons, ten viceroys, shums and governors, captains, officers, Church dignitaries; all were there in vast numbers arrayed in their striking and picturesque national dress, a "spectacle very acceptable to God as I believe but which gave also much content and consolation to men," as Mendez says.

The whole assembly was ringed round by troops, "their arms in good order," and then into this setting of oriental magnificence entered Mendez in his episcopal robes, crowned with his mitre, his crozier borne before him, followed by his attendant priests in their sacerdotal vestments.

Seated on a chair next to the emperor the patriarch "made a long speech or sermon to the audience to prove the supremacy of the Church of Rome," and then followed the climax of the proceedings.

"The emperor taking the New Testament in his hands open knelt down before the Patriarch and took the oath of supremacy to the Pope which was afterwards performed by all the nobility and clergy." The terms of the Emperor's oath as quoted by Mendez were as follows: "We Seltan Sagad by the Grace of God, Emperor of Ethiopia believe and confess that St. Peter was constituted Prince of the Apostles, Head of the Universal Church our Lord having said to him *Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my*

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"The Emperor was in the chancel richly clad with his gold crown on his head sitting on his imperial seat with a cushion of cloth of gold and brocade at his feet where he received and embraced the Patriarch who then went up to the altar and made a short speech which was much applauded."

The magnificence of this reception by the king and court was in marked contrast to the general reception accorded to the mission in the country and by the people as a whole, for it must constantly be remembered that the Abyssinians always detested and resisted the efforts of the Roman Catholics to supplant their religion, and although favoured by two kings who used all their moral influence and material force to back them the Jesuits never succeeded in making any impression on the nation generally, though they were the cause of years of civil war and of the spilling of rivers of blood.

Mendez passes over the general lack of enthusiasm with which he was greeted on his journey up, but the more ingenuous Lobo does not attempt to disguise their unpopularity. He tells us, *inter alia*, that on entering a village he was surprised to hear all the inhabitants "joining in one chorus of shrieks and lamentations;" and on enquiring what dreadful calamity had befallen them was informed that it was nothing but his own arrival, and that they were deploring the fate of their countrymen as they feared they would be entrapped by his fatal tenets. Wherever he went he found a similar impression prevail, and

on attempting to address them they fled at full speed! Hardly an encouraging reception.

It was also perhaps unfortunate for the mission that their arrival coincided with that of a terrible plague of locusts which laid bare the greater part of Tigrê, causing incalculable misery and suffering. The native priests were not slow to point the moral and adorn the tale, and the plague of locusts was variously described as a portent and warning of the danger of believing the Jesuits, or as a parallel to the result of their arrival. In this the priests were for once not far wrong.

But nothing would move the emperor from his purpose. He had publicly proclaimed his adhesion to Rome during the life of Paez (in 1622), and now with the advent of a fully accredited patriarch he proposed to repeat the effort with greater public pomp and ceremony.

Nor was Mendez minded to allow any time to be lost in setting the seal on the emperor's manifestations of friendship and professions of enthusiasm for the new faith.

Thirty-five oxen had been sent to him as a present on the day after his arrival at Dancaz; to this was added 2,000 gold crowns "for the expenses of the journey" from the emperor; one hundred oxen and three hundred measures of wheat were sent to Fremona and two hundred more to Gorgora.

Mass was said by the patriarch with great ceremony on the Sunday, adorned with the full and gorgeous ritual of the Roman Church, and then on the following Monday Mendez got to

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Priests and monks from twelve or thirteen neighbouring churches to the number of 3,000 came to greet him, adorned with parasols, playing cymbals and drums and burning incense, while messengers came from the king daily, and presents of oxen, sheep, honey " and other sorts of gifts very rare and very exquisite " were showered upon the party.

At last the king and Ras Sela Cristos brought their campaign to a close, and returning to Dancaz summoned Mendez to meet them there, where on February 7th a magnificent reception was staged for them.

Half a league from the camp he was met by 15,000 armed horsemen, including numbers of " gentlemen well mounted and accoutred . . . their saddles . . . plated with silver who " made him a low bow and then opening to the right and left took him in the midst of them, the air resounding with the noise of kettledrums, pipes and shouts. Thus was he conducted to a tent where he alighted to put on his bishop's rocket and hat, all the great men kissing his hand. Then mounting a mule covered with silver trappings and red damask, he proceeded to another tent where having put on a cope and white mitre he mounted a py'ed horse with gold trappings and a horse-cloth of white damask which the emperor had sent very richly trapped, and thus, under a canopy carried by six viceroys and prime noblemen he proceeded to the church, the Lord High Steward leading his horse, the music sounding all the way. At the church he was received with a discharge of some cannon.

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PASS ON THE ATBARA RIVER

Typical mountain scenery north of Lake Tana

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But he had no intention of creeping into the king's presence, or even of hurrying thither, and so in spite of urgent messages from the king and his brother, Ras Sela Cristos, he pleaded his own fatigue and the ill-health of his companions as a reason for awaiting the end of the rains at Fremona.

He had been received with much ceremony there, and when he started south on November 20th he had quite a royal progress. At the Jesuit station of Ganeta-Jesu near Lake Tana, which he reached on December 7th on the feast of St. Ambrose (a peculiarly appropriate day, inasmuch as that militant and intolerant saint was born just about the period of Abyssinia's original conversion to Christianity), he was received by the King's daughter, who appears to have impressed him greatly. He describes her as "a princess who from the colour of her face, comeliness and charm, but more still on account of her faith, seemed to be more Portuguese than a native of these parts. . . . On the next day, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, she was the first who came to confess to me, and took communion from my hands. Also during the three days we remained there she treated us magnificently to the annoyance of some of the other princesses whose husbands were at the Emperor's camp."

Mendez went on to Gorgora, a day's journey, and there he waited for over a month until the king had completed his campaign against the Jews in the north.

by their Robbers who bit their fingers to be thus disappointed of their prey," Mendez and his party arriving safely at Fremona on April 24th, 1633.

The patriarch had, of course, had the usual interchange of letters of remonstrance with Fasilidas before leaving, and it must be admitted that on this occasion the letters on both sides were dignified and worthy of the occasion.

Mendez wrote that "I did not adventure to come into Abyssinia with my companions of my own accord, but by the command of the Roman pontiff and the King of Portugal, at the request of your father, where having taken the King's oath of obedience I officiated the office of Patriarch in the name of the Roman pontiff and the King of Portugal. Now because you command me to depart my humble request is that your Majesty would set down the causes of my exilement in writing . . . that all the world may know whether I am compelled to suffer for my life and conversation or for the sake of my doctrine.

"I granted the ceremonies desired by your Father except the communion under both kinds which only the Pope himself can dispute with. The same also I again offer so that you and your subjects will yield obedience to the Church of Rome as the head of all the Churches.

"My last request is that as the matter was debated at first so it may be referred to another dispute by which means the truth of the whole affair will more manifestly appear."

The king replied that "Whatever was done

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CHAPTER XXIII

PATRIARCHATE OF AFFONSO MENDEZ

1623-1633

PART II

MENDEZ ARRIVES AT THE COURT OF ABYSSINIA

Mendez had a great idea of the importance of his mission, and he was accompanied by quite a retinue, consisting of four priests, two lay brothers, thirteen laymen, five musicians, two masons and two servants. He also bore with him many handsome presents for the Emperor, and rich vestments for himself and his priests.

As already pointed out he arrived at Fremona in June, and as the rainy season was then setting in he decided to spend it there before proceeding further.

It is probable that he came to this decision on grounds of policy, as much as for any other reason, for the priests already in the country were urging him to come to the king's court at Darcaz as soon as possible and they would hardly have done this if the journey had really presented such formidable difficulties as Mendez represents.

might have been easily at first allowed, for now there is no returning to that which the whole nation abhors and detests; for which reason all farther colloquies and disputes will be in vain."

It will be seen that Mendez now offered when it was too late vital concessions in the matter of ritual and doctrine—concessions which had he made on his arrival instead of stirring up bitter persecution of those who would not obey in every detail, might well have altered the whole history of Abyssinia and perpetuated instead of destroying the work of which Paez had so skilfully laid the foundations.

For it is interesting to observe that though the Jesuits were now persecuted, driven out of the kingdom or murdered, the other Portuguese were suffered to remain, showing perfectly clearly that it was the religious question and the religious question only that had aroused such bitter and general hostility throughout the country.

Fasilidas at once sent for a new Abuna from Egypt, and the arrival in 1635 of the new dignitary together with the departure of Mendez is thus tersely recorded in the old Ethiopian chronicle:

"That year there arrived the patriarch whose name was Rezeq, with the holy ark. . . . The Frank Alfonso returned into his own country."

But many difficulties were to beset the "Frank Alfonso" before he was to see India again—he never saw his own country more.

As soon as he and his party had reached Fremona he set to work to devise means to restore

by me before was done by the command of my father whom I was in duty bound to obey; so that I was forced to wage war under his conduct both with kindreds and subjects.

"But after the last battle of Wainadega the learned and unlearned clergy and laity, civil and military, young and old, all sorts of persons, made their addresses to my father, crying out How long shall we be perplexed and wearied with unprofitable things? How long shall we encounter brethren or kindred, cutting off the right hand with the left? How long shall we thrust our swords into our own bowels? Especially since we learn nothing from the Roman religion but what we knew before."

He then argued the question of the dual nature and the communion under both kinds, and went on to say:

"These are the things that gave offence to our people.

"But they detested nothing more than the reiteration of baptism as if we had been heathens before we had been baptised by the fathers. They re-ordained our priests and deacons, they burned the wooden chests of our altars, and consecrated altars of their own as if ours had not been consecrated before. . . .

"These and others of the same nature were the true causes that we abandoned the Roman faith, though it was not we who gave it protection but our father. . . .

"We command you to hasten to Fremona. Those things are offered now too late which

Here the governor "expected some mighty wedges of Ethiopian gold from us" and being disappointed threw them into prison to encourage them to make efforts to secure a good ransom from Diu.

Eventually, a figure of 1,200 pieces of eight was agreed on, borrowed from some banyans to be repaid at Diu, and at the beginning of March, after nearly six months' captivity, they set off on two small coasting vessels hoping to get to Diu by the end of April.

But owing to contrary winds they were two and a half months getting to Caixem, where they wintered, and eventually arrived at Diu about the middle of September, 1634.

While Manuel d'Almeida and his three companions were thus struggling on their way to India, Mendez and the rest of the party who had been left at Fremona were undergoing still greater hardships.

A Portuguese fleet had carried out an attack on Mombasa shortly after the banishment of the Jesuits to Fremona, and Fasilidas imagining that this was due to Mendez's efforts and was the precursor of an attack on Abyssinia itself, imperatively ordered Mendez and all the priests with him to leave the country finally.

The Patriarch was by no means minded to do this and indeed, "positively declared he would not stir unless dragged away by force." So the emperor's envoy having no power to do this returned to his master for further orders bearing letters from Mendez; while "for fear of exasperating

the position and despatched four priests under the leadership of Father Emanuel d'Almeida to stir up feeling in India and Portugal and to secure the despatch of troops against Abyssinia.

These four had a more than usually arduous and difficult journey back; it took them over a year and one of their number died on the way.

To get from Fremona to the coast was difficult enough for they had no passes or facilities from the king, and they were smuggled out by a round-about way to Arkiko thanks to the good offices of an Abyssinian lady who stood their friend in this their hour of need. Almeyda says that the route they followed "was a great compass about, and the woods and mountains full of lions, tigers and more fierce and cruel Moors. . . . We came to the coast near Defalo, ten leagues from Massawa which was the worst of all our way for the sun scorched on those sands like fire."

They reached Massawa about the middle of July, which is, of course the hottest time of the year, and Massawa is hot enough at any time; and although they had before leaving Fremona secured through some Indian banyans a pass from the Pasha of Suakin for four hundred pieces of eight, they had to pay six hundred more (which they borrowed) to his deputy at Massawa before he would let them pass, and another four hundred to the new Pasha of Suakin who had succeeded the former one.

They got away on August 19th, and got into Aden on the 31st, after their ship had been dismasted and nearly lost.

the Emperor too much" though probably really in order to deceive him, Father Apollinaris d'Almeyda, Bishop of Nice (who had only arrived with three others in 1630), went away to a province nearer the sea, with six other priests.

There had been twenty-one ecclesiastics altogether at Fremona, the Patriarch, the Bishop, and nineteen priests; four of these had departed on the mission to India, six more accompanied the Bishop and nine were thus left with Mendez.

The emperor now despatched a party to remove his unwelcome guests by force, but being informed of this, Mendez slipped out of Fremona, and took refuge with Johannes Akey, the Governor of the Sea Coast province, who had formerly rebelled against the emperor and had never made a formal submission, and whom Mendez hoped to stir up to renewed activity against Fasilidas and to alliance with the expected Portuguese force.

But Fasilidas was equal to the occasion, and he offered Akey a free pardon if he would hand over the Jesuits to him. Akey did not go quite as far as this, but he delivered them instead to the Turks at Massawa, who held them for a month in the hope of discovering "those mighty heaps of gold fame had spread abroad they brought out of Ethiopia."

During this period of detention—which must have been far from pleasant—Mendez wrote Fasilidas on June 14th, a most unclerical letter in which he really "let himself go," and accused the king of lying and of every sort of fault—it is

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possible to make allowances for him under the circumstances.

Not obtaining the gold—which was hardly surprising, as the Fathers had been robbed several times on the way—the Turks sent them on to the Pasha of Suakin, for which place they embarked on June 24th, 1634, spending forty-five days on the journey—a trip usually taking a week.

Their arrival at Suakin can hardly have been exhilarating, for " the first welcome they received was being told that the Pasha would take no ransom for them being resolved to rid the world of them."

Mendez, however, was no weakling, and he wrought with him, roundly pointing out that if he murdered them he would undoubtedly lose the trade with Diu, and probably suffer otherwise ; so the Pasha consented to ask the modest ransom of 30,000 pieces of eight, a figure which eventually he condescended to reduce to 4,000.

But when they came to embark (August 26th, 1634) he would only let seven go, and kept back Mendez and two of the others in the hope of getting more money for them. In this he was not disappointed, for after putting them in irons, and carrying on lengthy negotiations with some Indian merchants, another 4,000 pieces of eight were borrowed, and Mendez, de Mattos and Marquez were at long last able to leave the scenes of their tribulations, and, sailing on April 24th, 1635, arrived at Diu a month later.

Mendez's life at Suakin had been one of almost intolerable hardship ; nor can his mental sufferings

have been alleviated by the fact that while he was there the newly appointed Coptic Abuna of Abyssinia—for whom Fasilidas had applied to Egypt immediately on his accession—passed through on his way to take up his duties.

Mendez found he was a "frank Jacobite," very much "the reverse of simple, and that far from favouring the Catholics he would be one of their most cruel persecutors," a prevision which was to be amply verified. To make matters worse he was accompanied by a "heretic" of another breed, one, Peter Heyling, a young German lutheran who, to Mendez' horror, was proposing to spread Protestantism in Abyssinia.

The young man, however, was of a soft and gentle nature, and though he made no religious progress in Abyssinia, he got on very well with the people, and died there soon after his arrival.

Still full of zeal for his mission, we are told that Mendez went off immediately to Goa "to solicit for Ethiopia though without any success" —which was hardly surprising, for Portugal had her mind set on securing her own independence at that time (her sixty years' subjection to Spain came to an end in 1640), and Fasilidas had entered into arrangements with the Turks to allow no "Franks" to enter the country at all.

So Mendez' efforts were in vain, and though he never abandoned the idea of the conversion of Ethiopia *vi et armis*, he was unable to advance it in any way, and died some twenty years later at Goa in 1656, in the seventy-seventh year of his age.

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EXECUTION OF PORTUGUESE PRIESTS

Some of the priests refused to obey the order of expulsion issued in 1633, and these, together with others trying to escape through Moslem districts, were executed by decapitation, hanging or stoning.

Mendez was more fortunate than the Bishop and the six other fathers who had insisted on remaining in Abyssinia in spite of Fasilidas's orders, two of whom were assassinated, and the five others hanged, the last two suffering in 1640 " in a town where a fair was kept that day and . . . in the sight of a multitude of people."

The reasons for Mendez' failure are not far to seek; he may, I think, be condemned out of his own mouth and in the words of one of his fellow Jesuits.

At his interview with the Viceroy of India, which he had immediately on his return to India, the fiery priest represented in burning words the work and sufferings of the missionaries, the progress they had made, their exile and their imprisonment and the urgent necessity in which Catholicism stood of prompt assistance. His chronicler goes on to say: " But the methods which he proposed to preserve and extend our religion in that country were more those of conqueror than of a missionary or a bishop; he said that it was necessary to send a naval force into the Red Sea to take Massawa, build a fort and establish a garrison there, dethrone the Emperor, and replace him by his brother, and then provoke civil war in Abyssinia.

" Father Jerome Lobo spoke in much the same way, so that the Pope, the cardinals and all those who heard came to believe that the missionaries had introduced into their speech and all their conduct some of that martial humour only too natural to the Portuguese nation. . . .

They were convinced that the missionaries were not of those sheep who allow themselves to be led to the slaughter without complaint."

It may be left at that; they were never again allowed to try their hands at the conversion of Abyssinia.

A little later some French and Italian priests, neither Jesuits nor Portuguese, were sent to try to enter the country; but they got no further than the coast, though their heads and their skins stuffed with dried grass were sent as an offering to the Abyssinian emperor by the Moslem ruler of the sea province, with whom a treaty had been made to allow no foreigners to penetrate into Ethiopia.

Thus ended the extraordinarily persistent efforts of the Portuguese and of the Jesuits, extending as they did over a century and a half, to bring under the temporal and spiritual sway of outside authority the ancient African Kingdom of Ethiopia.

It is interesting to observe the different stages; first of all the overbearing da Lima seeking to form a political alliance, and meeting with no success, his guile and his arrogance alike failing before the native shrewdness of the Abyssinians. Then the single-minded da Gama, bent only on a chivalrous crusade to free a fellow Christian country from the yoke of a common foe, Islam, succeeding in his forlorn hope at the cost of his life, and preserving Abyssinia as a Christian outpost for all time.

After him the intolerant priest, Oviedo, aiming

at the spiritual subjugation of the country, meets with defeat no less complete than that of da Lima.

Paez, sincere, able, tactful and broad-minded, is able by reason of these qualities to achieve, or almost to achieve, success where his predecessors had failed; and then finally the whole of the one hundred and fifty years' work is brought to naught by the bigoted fanaticism and blundering intolerance of Mendez.

Almost was Gibbon justified in writing of the events of this period:

"The gates of that solitary realm were for ever shut against the arts, the science and the fanaticism of Europe."

For, although the Portuguese had been instrumental in preserving the freedom and the religion of Abyssinia against its Moslem foe, yet their subsequent efforts in no way tended ultimately to benefit or advance Abyssinia or its people from either the moral or material point of view; they in fact resulted in throwing back the country into deeper isolation and prolonging the period of its aloofness from the world—besides implanting in the minds of the people seeds of suspicion of all foreign enterprise, religious and other, seeds which bear fruit even to-day. Even to-day the "gates of Abyssinia" cannot be said to be very widely open.

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COMPARATIVE CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1470—1635

SHEWING THE

EMPERORS OF ABYSSINIA, KINGS OF PORTUGAL, VICEROYS OF INDIA, POPES AND ABUNAS

DURING THE PERIOD OF THE

VARIOUS PORTUGUESE EXPEDITIONS

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Comparative Chronological Table (1470-1635) shewing the Emperors of Abyssinia, Kings of Portugal, Viceroys of India, Popes, and Abunas during the period of the various Portuguese Expeditions.

YEARS. A.D.	EMPERORS OF ABYSSINIA	KINGS OF PORTUGAL	VICEROYS OR GOVERNORS OF INDIA	POPES	ABUNAS OF ABYSSINIA	PORTUGUESE EXPEDITIONS TO ABYSSINIA
1470	Baeda Maryam 1468-1478	Alphonso V 1438-1481		Sixtus IV, 1471-84	No Abuna, 1468-91	
75						
80	*(Admas)*					
85	Iskander 1478-1495	John II 1481-1495		Innocent VIII 1484-92		
90						
95	Amda Syon, 1495			Alexander VI 1492-1503		Arrival of Covilham, 1490
1500	Naod, 1495-1508					
5	*(Anbasa Batsar)*			Pius III, 1503		
10		Emanuel I 1495-1521	Dom F. d'Almeida, 1505-9	Julius II, 1503-13	Two appointed Mark and a deputy, Jacob or Joseph.	
15			Alfonso d'Alboquerque, 1509-15			
20			Lopo Soarez de Abergaria, 1515-18	Leo X, 1513-21		
			Diogo Lopez de Segueira, 1518-21			Matheus' mission to Europe, 1511-20
25	Lebna Dengel (David) 1508-1540		Dom Duarte de Menezes, 1521-24	Adrian VI, 1522-23	Joseph died between 1520 and 1526	Da Lima's expedition, 1520-26
			Dom Vasco da Gama, Conde de Vidigueira, 1524			
	(Wanag Sagad)		Dom Henrique de Menezes, 1525-6	Clement VII, 1523-34	Mark died between 1530 and 1535	Beginning of Moslem Invasions, 1527
30			Lopo Vaz de Sampayo, 1526-9			
35			Nuno da Cunha, 1529-38			Bermudez' Mission to Portugal, 1535
40		John III 1521-1557	Dom Garcia de Noronha, 1538-40			
45			Dom Estevao da Gama, 1540-42			Da Gama's Expedition, 1541-2
			Martin Affonso da Sousa, 1542-45	Paul III, 1534-49	John of Axum, 1540	
			Dom João de Castro, 1545-48			Final Moslem defeat, 1543
50	Galawdewos 1540-1559		Garcia de Sa, 1548-9		Yosab (or Joseph), 1547	
			Jorge Cabral, 1549-50		Peter, 1551	
	(Asnaf Sagad)		Dom Affonso de Noronha, 1550-4	Julius III, 1550-55		
55			Dom Pedro Mascarenhas, 1554-5	Marcellus II, 1555		

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Comparative Chronological Table (*continued*)

YEARS. A.D.	EMPERORS OF ABYSSINIA	KINGS OF PORTUGAL	VICEROYS OR GOVERNORS OF INDIA	POPES	ABUNAS OF ABYSSINIA	PORTUGUESE EXPEDITIONS TO ABYSSINIA
1555			F. Barreto, 1555-8	Paul IV, 1555-59		
			Dom Constantine de Braganza, 1558-61	Pius IV, 1559-65		
60	Minas, 1559-1563		Dom Francisco Coutinho, 1561-4			
65	*(Admas Sagad)*		João de Medonca, 1564			Oviedo's Patriarchate, 1556-1577
		Sebastian	Dom Antonio de Noronha, 1564-8	Pius V, 1566-72	Mark, 1567	
70		1557-1578	Dom Luiz de Athaide, 1568-71			
			Dom Antonio de Noronha, 1571-3			
75			Antonio Moniz Barreto, 1573-6	Gregory XIII		
	Sartsa Dengel		Dom Diogo de Menezes, 1576-8	1572-85		
80	1563-1595	Henry I	Dom Luiz de Athaide, 1578-81			
	(Malak Sagad)	1578-1580	Fernao Telles de Menezes, 1581			
			Dom Francisio Mascarenhas, 1581-4			
85			Dom Duarte de Menezes, Conde de Tarouca, 1584-8	Sixtus V, 1585-90		
				Urban VII, 1590		
90		Philip I	Manoel de Sousa Coutinho, 1588-91	Gregory XIV, 1590-91	Christodulos, 1590	
		1581-98	Mathias d'Albuquerque, 1591-7	Innocent IX, 1591		Paez's first journey, 1588-1595
95		(*Philip II*	Dom Francisco da Gama, Conde de			
		Spain)	Vigigueira, 1597-1600	Clement VIII		
1600	Yakob, 1595-1604		Ayres de Saldanha, 1600-5	1592-1605		Da Sylva's Mission, 1598-1604
			Martim Affonso de Castro, 1605-7			
	Za Dengei, 1604					
5	Yakob (again) 1604-5	Philip II		Leo XI, 1605	Peter (killed in battle)	
		1598-1621	Dom Fr. Aleixo de Menezes, Arch-		1605)	
		(*Philip III*	bishop of Goa, 1607-9			
		of Spain)	Andre Furtado de Mendonca, 1609		Simeon, 1605-1617	
10			Ruy Lorenzo de Tavora, 1609-11			
15			Dom Jeromymo de Azevedo, 1611-7	Paul V, 1605-21		Paez's Mission, 1603-1623
	Susenyos		Dom João Coutinho, Conde de			
	1605-1632		Redondo, 1617-9			
20	*(Seltan Sagad)*		Fernao de Albuquerque, 1619-22	Gregory XV		
			Dom F. de Gama, Conde de	1621-23		
25		Philip III	Vidigueira, 1622-27			
		1621-40	Dom Fr. Luiz de Brito, Bishop of			
		(*Philip IV*	Meliapor, 1627-8	Urban VIII		Mendez's Patriarchate 1625-1633
30		*of Spain*)	A Commission,† 1628-9	1623-44		
	Fasilidas		M. de Noronha, Conde de Linares, 1629-35			
1635	1632-1665				Rezek, 1635	
	(Alam Sagad)		P. da Silva, 1635-9		Mark, 1636	

* Regnal names assumed by the monarchs of Abyssinia on accession to the throne.

† The Commissioners were Nuno Alvarez Botello, Dom Lorenço da Cunha, and Gonçalo Pinto de Fonseca.

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GENEALOGICAL TABLE

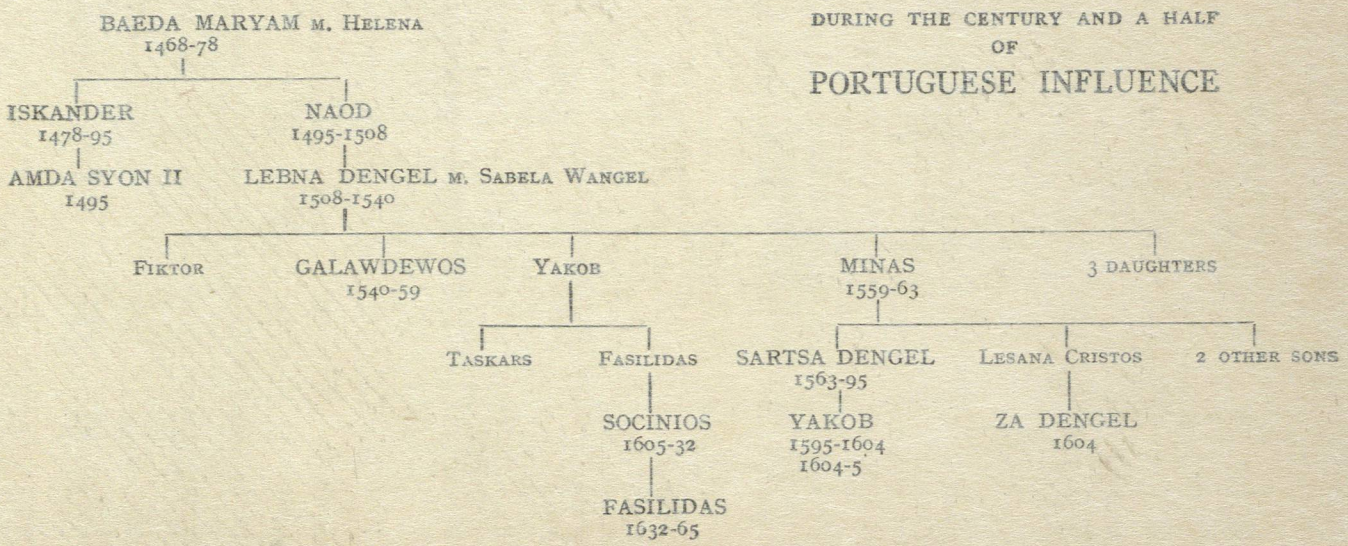
OF THE

ABYSSINIAN SOVEREIGNS

DURING THE CENTURY AND A HALF

OF

PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE



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